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OR,

The Daughter Avenger.

A Romance of Secret Service Mysteries.

BY TOM. W. KING.

CHAPTER I.

ON BOARD THE "GLEAM."

THE moon shone down in golden splendor upon the rippling waters of New York Bay, and a score of yachts, at anchor off the shores of Bay Ridge, rose and fell upon the waves, as though anxious to spread their white wings and fly away over the blue waters of the sea.

At anchor some distance from the rest of the fleet, was a trim craft, bearing upon her stern in gilt letters the name

"GLEAM,"

and her tapering topmasts bending gracefully, as she rose on the swelling waves, seemed to be nodding a salute to the other yachts of the pleasure squadron.

Upon her decks were but two persons. They were seated in the cockpit, and seemingly oblivious to all the rest of humanity except each other.

THE FIGURE, STOPPING A FEW FEET AWAY, REPEATED THE WORD: "MURDERER!"

"What a perfect night!" Mervyn," murmured the fair young girl who was one of the twain, "and how peaceful everything seems about us!"

"Yes, darling," returned her companion, "and how beautiful the far lights of the city twinkle in the waters that lave its feet."

"And to think that in that distant metropolis yonder, men's minds are running riot, and that in more than one dark dwelling, deeds of evil are even now being plotted," and the girl shuddered as if from a sudden chill, while her lover drew her light wrap more closely about her.

"You are not cold, Renie?" he asked, caressingly.

"Not at all. I only shivered from nervousness as I thought of what evil passions and the thirst for gold and vengeance will lead men into—"

"But what do you think of my yacht?" asked Mervyn Temple, anxious to lead her thoughts in another direction.

"She is perfect, and if her cabin only half comes up to my expectations, she will be worthy of a queen."

"If she is only half worthy of my queen I will be more than content. I am very sorry that I have not the keys, so that I could show you how excellently the arrangements have been carried out below; but the captain has gone ashore with the crew to dance at his tin wedding, and locked everything up."

"Never mind, I will see her to-morrow. But, Mervyn, I think that we had better row ashore; mother will scold me if I stay out very late."

"It is only nine o'clock, Renie," he said, as the boom of a distant bell rolled suddenly over the waters from some church-tower on Staten Island; and she will not expect you before ten. You know it is not a very long distance from the landing float to the house."

"Well, we will remain a short time longer then, for I confess I am loth to leave this enchanting spot. When is the yacht race, and what is the course?"

"On Wednesday next. We take a flying start from a stake-boat off the club-house, and sailing around Sandy Hook light-ship, return, crossing at the finish, an imaginary line drawn between the points first mentioned."

"And is the Gleam entered?"

"Yes, and if she shows herself worthy after this, her first race, she shall be rechristened."

"And what will you call her?"

"I will—with your permission, of course—call her the Renie."

"Oh, I should be delighted, but I am sorry that she is not to sail under my name on Wednesday."

"I want to see what she can do first. Moxton, who built her, claims that she will outsail anything in these waters."

"And is she all ready?"

"Yes. The boys, you know, fitted her out completely at Greenpoint, and say that when they came up the Sound yesterday and last night, she walked away from everything as a racer would from a plow-horse."

"I am so glad!" cried the girl, clapping her hands gleefully; "but really, Mervyn, we must go ashore; this is very delightful, but, mamma—you know!"

"Yes, I know; but it will not be long until you will not have to obey her; you will only have to obey your husband."

"And that I will never do, so there now, Mr. Mervyn Temple! What do you think of that?" and the witching face, doubly lovely in the soft moonlight, was turned up to his with a roguish smile, and a mischievous look in the blue eyes, blue as the sky above them.

And Temple, only answering: "We'll see!" stooped and kissed her lips unreprieved; then, walking to the starboard side of the yacht, and looseing the painter that held the dainty boat floating alongside, he turned to assist Renie down the steps, when there came across the waters, from the direction of the city, the regular beat of oars clanking in their row-locks, and, looking off in the direction indicated, Temple saw, pulling steadily toward them, and sweeping rapidly down with the tide, two large boats, each of which were filled with men.

"What can that mean, Mervyn?" whis-

pered Renie, as she paused, looking anxiously at her lover.

"I cannot imagine, dear; probably a party out for a moonlight row. We will soon see, however; but, do not be frightened; no harm can come to you, here."

But, as he walked aft to look at the approaching boats, the painter, loosely held in his hand, slipped from his grasp and the row-boat drifted off rapidly with the tide.

The gig and another boat hung on the starboard and port davits, but he well knew he could not, unaided, lower them, so he determined to hail the boats and ask the occupants to set Renie and him ashore.

Resting his hand on the boom, on which the mainsail lay closely furled, he waited a moment and then called out:

"Boat ahoy!"

No answer came and he repeated it, without any result, however, but that of causing the oarsmen to row with increased vigor, in obedience to a sharp order issued by the coxswain of one of the boats.

And, as they bore down on the yacht, they separated, one pulling to the starboard, the other to the port, and then swung round and came alongside, when sharp orders were issued simultaneously from both crafts:

"Way 'nough!"

"Ship oars!"

"Bowman, hook on!"

As the two bow-oarsmen caught the taffrail with their boat-hooks, the crews of the two boats swarmed on deck, there being a dozen or more of them.

Their leader was a fair-haired young fellow of eighteen or thereabouts, dressed in a neatly fitting suit of blue cloth, the brass buttons of which glistened in the moonlight.

Advancing to where the shrinking girl and her escort stood, he removed his cap and said, courteously, but sternly:

"Sorry to trouble you, sir, but the situation demands it;" and then, turning to his crew, he added:

"Bind and gag that man, but do not touch the lady unless she calls for assistance."

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

"BUT, Trix, I am determined to go."

"How?"

"Never mind 'how'; where there is a will—you know the rest."

"Of course I know the old proverb, yet I do not see that alone will enable you to do as you wish; the very idea is ridiculous."

"You will see that it is not so ridiculous as you think in a day or two."

"Maybe I will, maybe not; but I wish you would tell me, Herbert, how you, who have perhaps a hundred dollars in the world, can join in a yacht race when you do not even own a row-boat, much less a yacht."

"Leave me to manage that. All I want to know is this: if I provide the craft, will you go?"

"I am sorry, Bert, but I think that I will be compelled to decline."

"You do not doubt my sailing qualities?"

"Not in the least, for I know that you had excellent schooling when poor father was alive, and remember what he often said, referring to you: 'What that boy does not know about yachts and yachting is not worth learning.'"

"Yes, I know he taught me thoroughly; I only wish that we could have saved the 'Beatrice' from the wreck of his fortune."

"Yet that was impossible, and how much better it is to be able to look every one in the face, boldly, with the knowledge that we owe no man a dollar, than to be enjoying luxuries that are not justly our own."

"You are right, sir. But, now, I must be off."

"Tell me one thing, Herbert, before you go."

"I'll tell you anything that I can."

"You are not going up town to-night?"

"No, not to-night."

"And you will be home early?"

"I may not be back for several days."

"Oh, Herbert, I do wish you would give up these nocturnal wanderings."

"I will soon, Trixie; but to-night I must go. Do not worry about me; I am not going to do anything very bad; good-night!"

"Good-night, Bert; but I do wish that you were not going."

"It's too late now," replied Herbert,

cheerfully, and taking his hat from the stand and kissing his sister, he was off like a flash.

This conversation was held on the same evening that the "Gleam" was boarded by the crews of the two boats, and took place in a small, plainly-furnished sitting-room on the second floor of a house situated on Twenty-fifth street.

To these rooms Herbert and Beatrice Waters had come, after their father's death, when they found that they would have to leave their magnificent home on Fifth avenue, nothing, it appeared, being left of their father's splendid fortune but a few hundred dollars, which Beatrice had husbanded carefully, but which small sum was dwindling, dollar by dollar, until she saw the time rapidly approaching when both she and her brother would have to give up even the humble home they now occupied and seek more economical quarters.

The house in which they now lived was rented by an old family servant, who managed to make a modest living by renting furnished rooms, and who declared that neither Beatrice nor her brother should want for shelter so long as she had a roof over her head.

Left to herself, the girl, after walking to the window and seeing Herbert board a car that passed down one of the avenues near by, for the house was not far from the corner, seated herself in a low rocking-chair, and taking up a piece of embroidery she had thrown aside when her brother had entered, began to work slowly and silently.

But, presently, there came a knock on the door and a servant entered, carrying a letter between her thumb and forefinger as cautiously as if it were a pistol.

"This came for you this afternoon, Miss Beatrice, and was put in the stand drawer in the hall, where I found it when I went to get a match."

"Thank you, Mary; I forgot to look there, and, in fact, did not expect anything to-day."

And when the girl had withdrawn she looked at the envelope, carefully, wondering as every one does when they see a strange handwriting, who it could be from.

"Can it be an answer to my advertisement already?" she said aloud; "but no, that is scarcely probable, for it only appeared this morning. The quickest way to learn, I suppose, though, is to open the envelope and see."

In a moment more the torn wrapper lay at her feet, while she gazed at the open sheet she held in her hand in astonishment, for it bore at the top the following head:

"FERRETT'S DETECTIVE AGENCY."

"All manner of private business carefully and promptly attended to. Consultation confidential. Telephone connection. Branches in all principal cities."

And underneath this was pasted a slip cut from a newspaper, that contained an advertisement thus worded:

"A young lady, well educated and speaking several languages, desires honorable employment at a small salary. References given and required. Address Beatrice W., No. 2—, 25th street, city."

It was a copy of an advertisement that she had inserted in the *Herald* of that date.

Having satisfied herself of this fact, Beatrice then turned to the letter itself and read:

"NEW YORK, May 3, 18—"

"Miss Beatrice W. can obtain honorable and lucrative employment by calling at the office of R. W. Ferrett, No. 10 Blank street, at 10 o'clock on the 4th inst., when her duties can be learned, and the salary to be paid made known."

"A detective agency!" murmured the girl. "What service could I perform that would suit them?"

"But, what an opportunity this position would offer to find out what Herbert suspects! and what a glorious thing it would be if I could right my father in the eyes of the world and once more regain possession of his fortune."

"Herbert certainly knows more about this matter than I do, and is straining every nerve, using every opportunity to accumulate enough money to bring suit against—"

A second rap at the door interrupted her as she was talking to herself, and, in response to her call of "Come in," the door opened and the landlady appeared, just as Miss Waters concealed the letter in her lap.

"La me! Miss Trixie, if you ain't all alone, and that scapegrace young brother o' yours, where on earth has he gone gallivantin' to this time o' night?"

"I tell you, Miss Trixie, it ain't no use a-talkin'; for as my poor husband—the last—used to say: 'Spare the rod an' you'll spile the tree,' an' if lettin' young boys go runnin' about the streets arter dark, ain't a-sparin' the rod, I want to know what it is," and thus having logically and triumphantly got out of her tangle of words, good-natured Mrs. Morton breathed hard and tried to look severe.

"But Herbert is almost a man, Mrs. Morton," replied Beatrice, gently, and looking intensely amused; "but sit down a few moments; I want to ask you something."

And when the old lady was comfortably settled, she continued:

"Was not your last husband a *detective*?"

"He was, miss, an' a better never lived; didn't he go an' get killed, as brave as a lion, while doing his dooty? But don't you never let Mr. Herbert go an' be a detective; it is a wearin' life, an' a very dangerous one."

"I do not think he has any intention of doing anything of the sort; at least, he has never mentioned it to me."

"But, I heard the bell ring; shall I run down and open the front door for you?"

"If you will, Miss Trixie, for my old knees is about give out."

And so, leaving the room, Beatrice tripped down stairs and turned the knob, when, as the door swung open she cried:

"You here!" and then more quietly:

"What is it; whom do you want?"

CHAPTER III.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

BACK from the city, to the waters of the harbor, and the deck of the schooner yacht Gleam, I would have my reader accompany me.

When the crew of the boat, which had run alongside the yacht, boarded the little vessel, Mervyn Temple was very quickly seized, bound and gagged. He was wholly unable to move or utter a cry, while the young girl stood looking on, trembling with fear and apprehension, but the young commander of the crew turned to her and said:

"You have nothing to fear, but I must ask you not to attempt to call for assistance, or it will be necessary to use such means as will prevent you from doing so, a second time. Have I your word that you will not attempt to raise an alarm?"

"You have, sir."

"Then you are as safe as if in your own parlor, at home, with none around you but your friends, and this gentleman"—pointing to Temple—"shall not be harmed!"

"I need his yacht for a short time and as he would probably not lend her to me, I am compelled to forego his permission and take her without his consent."

"I do not care to have him send after and capture the Gleam, so I will not land you for some time yet, and then at a point some distance away from here."

"Coxswain!" turning to one of his crew, "send some one aft to force open the cabin door. Let him try to break the lock without injuring the woodwork, but let him get it open some way."

In a few moments the door was forced, and the leader ordered half of his crew below.

"We are taking big chances, and must not appear to be carrying too many hands, or some of the men on the other boats will suspect something."

"Leon!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Get up the foresail and mainsail as quickly and quietly as you can and see that the jib is clear. I'll take the wheel. Bo's'n!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered a tall, fine-looking young fellow who came tumbling aft in response to the summons.

"Heave your anchor short, and get some of the men to hoist up one of the yawls. You, there!" to the man who held the starboard boat, "drop back to the stern and make the painter fast, and then tumble aboard."

In a moment the busy hands were at work, and the clanking of the windlass sounded sharp on the quiet air of the night, while the blocks rattled as the two enormous sails were hoisted, they shining like two huge white wings in the moonlight.

"Anchor's short, sir!" came from the bows as the cable straightened and stretched in

nearly a plumb line down from the hawse-holes.

"That will do with the foresail," cried the leader. "Come aft here, some of you, and haul up the mainsail. Stand by your jib halliards."

And now turning to Renie, who had stood silently watching these maneuvers, the boy spoke to her:

"I must now insist that you go below for a time, as it is not necessary that any one should know in what direction we are to sail."

"But, sir," pleaded the girl, "my mother, who even now expects me in yonder house," pointing to a residence some distance away, the lights from the windows of which shone brightly out in the night, "will be very anxious about me if I am away much longer. Can you not, will you not, set us ashore here, before you sail?"

"I will, on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That you promise me not to mention a word of this evening's events until a week shall have passed by."

"I promise."

"And you, sir," turning to Mervyn Temple, who stood immovable.

"Do you make me the same promise? A nod will do."

Temple, doubtless realizing that prompt obedience was his best policy, nodded his head.

"Now listen: I require that you shall give me your word of honor as a gentleman, not to mention this matter to a soul until one week from to-night, and that at no time will you endeavor to discover who was concerned in this evening's events. Will you give me your word?" and stepping behind Temple he loosened the gag.

"Remember! If you call out or make the slightest attempt to attract attention, overboard you go, and with your hands and feet tied, I do not think that you would find it easy to swim ashore."

"I give you my word of honor as a gentleman," said Temple, as the gag fell from his lips, "that I will in no manner interfere, or cause interference, with your movements to-night; that I will not mention this matter to a soul during the time mentioned; that I will never try to discover anything about you or your friends."

"That is sufficient, sir, and you are free," casting off his bonds as he spoke.

"One thing more," continued Temple, as the boy was about to turn away.

"Anything you wish, sir."

"Is this a *loan*, or am I making you a present of my yacht?"

"Your yacht will lie at her present anchorage one week from to-night, sir, in as perfect condition as she is at present. I promise you that she shall not be harmed a particle."

"Very well, then. But I regret that she will not be able to take part in the race on Wednesday."

"I hope that you may win many another race with her, sir, during the summer. And now, I will set you ashore."

Having given the necessary orders, the boat that floated astern was drawn alongside, the crew took their places, and Temple and Renie, having seated themselves in the stern, the former taking the lines, they shoved off, and pulled toward the landing-stage, just as the clock in a distant steeple tolled the hour of ten.

In a short half-hour the leader, who sat aft, listening for the return of the boat, heard the beat of the oars as the crew pulled out, and recognized the fact that something was wrong, as they were rowing nearly forty strokes to the minute; so, leaping to the companionway, he shouted:

"All hands on deck!"

Immediately the rest of the crew came tumbling up, when he ordered them forward, and turning, watched the boat, which, just then, shot out of the basin, followed a moment later by a larger craft, which was crowded with men.

But gradually the foremost boat drew away and increased its lead, and in a wonderfully short time dashed up alongside the Gleam.

"On board, all of you!" shouted the leader, "and let the boat adrift! Heave on your anchor—heave!"

"Up with your jib! Lively, boys—lively!"

And, as the anchor broke, and the jib was run up, the Gleam fell off before the increasing breeze, just as the bow oarsman, striking with his hook, tried to fasten on to her counter, but missing his aim, fell headlong into the water.

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG YACHTSMAN.

WHEN Herbert had left his sister, he boarded a down-town car, as Beatrice saw, and rode to Vesey street and Broadway, where he left the conveyance, and crossing Broadway, walked rapidly down to Fulton, and so on to the ferry, where he crossed over to Brooklyn.

Once in that city he hurried along uptown until he came to a cross street, into which he plunged, and soon came to a high fence which ran for some distance along the sidewalk, and over which he, with some difficulty, climbed, and found himself in a large yard, which extended down to the wharves built along the water's edge.

Lying alongside one of the docks was an old, dismantled hulk, which had been abandoned for some time, and now seemed entirely deserted, for there was no one in sight, and not a ray of light shone from her interior.

But, Herbert did not hesitate. He walked boldly and steadily on until he came to her stern, in the shadow of which he saw, swinging to and fro, a stout rope.

This he grasped, and by its aid climbed to her deck.

Walking forward, he stamped on the deck with his heel at regular intervals, when, in a moment, a hatchway was raised, and going toward it, he descended into the hold by means of a ladder that was placed there, the boy who had opened the hatch having preceded him.

Arrived at the bottom of the ladder, he turned and walked aft again, until his further progress was arrested by a stout oaken bulwark that ran across the lower deck. On this bulkhead he knocked, when a masked door was opened, and the two stepped inside, closing the entrance after him.

In the cabin into which they had entered were seated fifteen boys, ranging in years from fourteen to eighteen, each of them dressed in a suit of blue cloth and wearing blue caps with shiny visor.

As Herbert entered they all arose, touched their caps with military precision and remained standing until the new-comer had walked the whole length of the room, and then, standing on a raised dais, he raised his hand, when all of the boys sunk back in their seats, except the one who had admitted him. He remained standing by Herbert's side.

"Pursy, call the roll!"

The boy who stood by the president of the meeting, if he may so be called, taking a book from a stand near by, read off the names, each one of the boys, as his name was called, rising and standing with his fingers raised to his cap until the secretary had called out "present!" when he dropped back into his seat.

Having completed the list, the purser turned to Herbert, touched his cap and reported:

"All present, sir!"

"I am glad to see you all so prompt, particularly on this evening, gentlemen," said Herbert, "for I have something to propose to you in which I would be glad to have all of you join, although any who wish, may decline to accompany us. We will now adjourn the formal meeting and I will talk the matter over, sociably."

The boys having taken easier positions, some of them removing their caps, he continued:

"You all know my position: how my father died with a stain on his name, and how his fortune was swept away from my sister and myself—by foul means, as I firmly believe."

"You know, also, that I am striving, by every means in my power, to earn enough money to fight this matter in the courts, and how I have been rebuffed, in my efforts to obtain a position by the *charitable* men to whom I have applied."

"Without a single exception they have

replied to me: "Like father, like son," and thus I am compelled to use other means to attain my end. A yacht-race takes place on Wednesday next—the day after to-morrow—and in this race I have determined to take part—for what reason I will make known to you afterward.

"The schooner yacht 'Gleam' now lies off Bay Ridge, and from what I saw of her performance this morning, as she came up the Sound, I am convinced that she is wonderfully fast, and in this yacht I propose to sail the race."

"I was down at Bay Ridge this afternoon, Bert," interrupted one of the boys, "and saw her anchored there. She is a beauty, sure enough! But, how can you get her? Would her owner lend her to you?"

"Not much! I propose to capture her to-night."

"That we may be able to do," acquiesced the other, with all the confidence of a boy, who considers nothing impossible; "but, how on earth can you sail the race in her? You'd be arrested in a minute!"

"Yes, if anybody knew that it was the same boat; but, I do not propose that such a thing shall happen."

"How will you prevent it?"

"Easily enough. What I want to know now, though, is: How many of you will join me?"

"I! I! I!" came a dozen shouts until Herbert raised his hand for quiet.

"All who will go, rise!" he cried, and in response not a chair remained occupied.

"All of you go, then," continued the speaker, after the boys had seated themselves. "Thank you, fellows; we will have a glorious sail and no harm will come of it. Now to business!"

Instantly every boy sat bolt upright, and the caps were replaced on their heads with mathematical precision.

"Leon," called the presiding officer, "you will act as first officer, and, as you are thoroughly familiar with all of the boys, qualifications, you can select your subordinates."

"Hurry, for I want to be off in half an hour, as the tide will serve at that time."

"And now, purser, a word with you," and rising, followed by the boy whom he called purser, Herbert left the cabin by a rear door, while the boys arose and remained standing until he disappeared.

The room into which Herbert penetrated was filled with all manner of odds and ends, among which, hanging on pegs, were twenty or thirty old suits of clothes, ragged and torn, battered hats and ancient oil-skins and sou'-westers, while the floor was littered with old sails and a number of boxes and barrels of provisions, all of them having been purchased and paid for.

Herbert having designated certain articles that they would need, and the purser having made a note of them, they returned to the main cabin, where Leon Lawrence handed him a list of the boys selected to serve in different capacities, glancing over which Herbert nodded his head approvingly.

"Now, bo's'n, go into the store-room with half a dozen of the boys and band up the things the purser will point out to you. They must be loaded into the large boat and then we'll be off."

"Be lively, now, for we've no time to lose."

And soon the boat which lay alongside was loaded, the boys were seated in their places—another yawl having been pulled from under the wharf and manned and the order "Give way" having been issued, the boys bent to their oars with a will and pulled steadily away for Bay Ridge.

The result we have seen.

CHAPTER V. A PROTECTOR.

"I WANT to see you," replied the visitor, at the sight of whom Beatrice had appeared so surprised.

"See me?"

"Yes."

"You well know, sir, that I do not want to see you."

"But this is an important matter and concerns both you and your brother."

"Well, if you will walk up-stairs I will listen to what you have to say, but it must be in the presence of Mrs. Morton."

"Mrs. Morton? Who is Mrs. Morton?"

"An old family servant and now the landlady of this house."

"Then that puts an end to this proposed interview: I must see you alone or not at all."

"Just as you please; good-evening!" and Beatrice held the door wide open that he might pass out.

Seeing that she was determined, however, the visitor submitted with the best grace possible, and said, as he hung his hat on the rack:

"Well, if you insist, I suppose that I will have to submit. Will you lead the way?"

The girl closed the door and, without a word, preceded him up-stairs and, entering her room said to the landlady:

"Mrs. Morton, I have a visitor, but I wish you to remain and assist at our meeting, for I do not wish to be insulted and I fear that I would be were I to meet this 'person' alone."

"Certain, my dear, certain, an' if any one offers to consult you it will be worse for him!" and the old lady glared fiercely at the intruder.

"Gently, my good woman, gently. Miss Beatrice is a little rash in assuming for a moment that I would so far forget myself as to say anything that would displease her."

"Well, sir," interrupted the girl abruptly, and stopping Mrs. Morton, who was about to blaze out, with a look of entreaty, "the sooner you state your business the sooner it will be completed. What have you to say to me?"

"When I first called on you, Miss Beatrice," began the visitor, seating himself leisurely, while the girl remained standing, "I made a proposition to you which I will repeat for the benefit of Mrs. Morgan here."

"Morton, sir, if you please," interrupted the old lady snappishly, "which it was my husband's name an' a better never stood in shoe-leather."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Morton; my memory is sometimes treacherous:

"This proposition was that I should settle upon you and your brother a certain yearly sum, the amount being twelve hundred dollars annually to each of you, and that you should both become members of my household; you remember?"

"Remember, perfectly, and I remember, also, that we both declined your offer."

"You were both foolish, very foolish, and were even insulting if you recall your words."

"I recall them perfectly. They were these: Vane Temple, if you think that you can bribe us into silence; into ceasing our investigations; into abandoning our efforts to clear our father's name, and wresting his fortune from the hands of those who robbed him, swindled him, murdered him, you are woefully mistaken!"

"Exactly; they were the wild words of a foolish boy and a more foolish girl who were imbued with the idea that their father had been swindled, where, in fact, he was the swindler."

"Leave my room, sir, instantly, or, weak girl that I am I will find means to drive you out as I would a snarling cur!"

"Yes, an' leave my house!" cried Mrs. Morton, blazing with wrath and rising from her chair, while she twined an arm about the waist of the shrinking girl.

"Shame on you! shame! to come here and insult this poor child by slurring her dead father!"

"Then you will not listen to me?"

"I would not listen to you if I were starving in the street and you came to me with your outstretched hands full of gold."

"Then suffer!" he snarled. "I tracked you by your advertisement in the *Herald*, this morning, and I know from it that want, poverty and distress are rapidly stealing upon you."

"Suffer then, from hunger, sickness and want, for I will never again extend a finger to aid you, and should you apply at my door for assistance, my servants will have orders to thrust you from the door as they would the vilest tramp that walks the street."

"I was intending to offer you a home and, as my son had just returned from abroad, I thought that maybe you and he might make a match of it."

"No further insults, sir, or—"

"No insult is intended, and none can be; on the contrary you should consider it an honor that I would even think of you as my son's wife."

"Honor! to be allied to such a man as you! Oh, Mrs. Morton, can I not be spared these insults that this man is offering me?"

"Who speak of insults in the same breath with Miss Waters?" asked a quiet voice outside, and then the partially-closed door was thrown open and a young man stepped into the room.

As she saw him Mrs. Morton turned to him and cried:

"Oh, Mr. Jeffrey, you are just in time to prevent further insult to my poor child."

"And has this man been speaking harshly to Miss Waters?"

"He has, more than harshly, vilely! Cruelly!" sobbed Beatrice, pale and trembling.

"Then, sir," said Allan Jeffrey, turning to Vane Temple, and speaking curtly and sternly, "I warn you to leave the room and the house, instantly!"

"And, pray, sir, who may you be?"

"That matters little. It is enough for you to know that I will not stand by and see unprotected womanhood insulted."

"On my soul a Knight of the Round Table come to life again, or the Chevalier Bayard *redivivus*, which is it?"

"Once more," repeated the other, without paying any attention to the sneer, "will you leave the house, or—"

"I will not go until I have finished what I have to say to this vicious girl he—"

How it happened he never exactly knew, but he suddenly found himself whirled head over heels out of the room, down the stairs into the street, landing far out on the sidewalk, whence he rolled into the gutter, while the door, which had been closed, was opened again and his hat tossed out after him.

Stumbling to his feet, he brushed his dusty clothes and rubbed his bruised and aching elbows and knees, shook his fist at the house as he muttered a vow of vengeance, and then, picking up his hat, placed it on his head and started off down the street.

But, Beatrice and Mrs. Morton, standing in the sitting-room, heard the crash as Vane Temple struck the sidewalk, and fearing that he might be hurt ran to the window and looked out, but were much relieved to see him rise and after hesitating a moment, walk away.

They then turned as if expecting that Allan Jeffrey would come back, but, a few minutes after, they heard the front door close again, while he went whistling down the street as indifferently as if nothing had happened.

It was a delicate action on his part, and one that showed that he had not relieved Beatrice of Vane Temple's presence to win thanks or praise. It raised him even higher in the girl's estimation than he already stood.

And Beatrice, blushing rosy red, turned to Mrs. Morton, and seeing her looking intently into her eyes, blushed still more and hid her face in the motherly bosom of the landlady.

While Mrs. Morton, nodding her head sagely as a Chinese mandarin, smiled beamingly and muttered to herself:

"I thought as much!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE GLEAM IN A STORM.

As the Gleam flew off, close hauled, under the influence of the freshening breeze, Herbert Waters, who had taken the wheel, gave orders to set the fore and main topsails, and under this additional canvas the schooner fairly flew through the sparkling water, while, when the staysail was clapped onto her, she tore the surface of the harbor into shimmering foam and salt spray that flew far above her cat-heads and drenched her decks as far aft as the foremast.

"She's a racer, captain, isn't she?" said Leon Lawrence, as he came aft with some of the men to flatten down the main-sheet.

"She is, indeed, and I doubt if there is a yacht in the fleet that she will not show a clean pair of heels to on Wednesday."

"Which way are we bound, sir?"

"We will hold our present course until that cloud rising yonder hides the moon,

when we will come about and run for the sound.

"Muster your crew aft here and set your watches, and let some of the boys turn in for a time. It looks as though we were going to have a blow, so see that everything is snug, and batten the fore-hatch down; the boys can use the cabin companionway when they wish to go below."

"Shall I relieve you at the wheel, then?"

"No, I shall not go below to-night; but you may send one of the quartermasters to me, for this craft pulls like a team of trotters."

"Had we better not take in the topsails, sir?" asked Leon a few moments afterward, as, having divided the crew, he finished what had been ordered, an unusually violent gust at that moment causing the *Gleam* to careen far to leeward and the masts to bend like whip-stocks.

"Not just yet; I want to see what she will stand. You may call Billy, though, and tell him to bring me my pea-jacket and an oil-skin, for, if I am not mistaken, we are going to get a drenching before the night is over."

In a few moments the cabin-boy appeared with the wraps, when Herbert, telling the man who was helping at the wheel to hold her as she was for a few moments, stepped forward and put on his heavy jacket and his oil-skin coat, clapping a sou'wester on his head at the same time.

Then turning, he called out, as the sails fluttered and the *Gleam* straightened:

"Carefully, quartermaster, what are you about?"

"Wind's shifted a point, sir."

"Oh, jumping around to the south and east, is it? Then we *will* have a blow. Let her off a little, quartermaster."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And now the wind was blowing half a gale, and the white-caps were beginning to show on the water, which had suddenly become black and opaque, while the schooner began to tumble about on the rolling waters as if she would jump her masts out.

The wind and sea were rising rapidly, and the black cloud which had been slowly rising against the wind now began to obscure the moon, and in a few moments covered it entirely, leaving them in total darkness, save where the binnacle lamp threw a faint circle of light on the wet deck.

The whistling and howling of the wind became terrific, and Herbert, turning to the bos'n who stood near him, shouted an order into his ears, when the shrill whistle sounded out, and the watch coming tumbling aft, the fore and main-topsails were taken in in a jiffy.

When this work had been completed, the yacht was eased up a little, and a double reef taken in fore and mainsail, while the jib was taken in and snugly clewed down.

Then the helm being put up, the schooner payed off, and again dashed on her course, riding much more easily now that the tremendous weight had been taken from aloft.

They sailed on thus for some time, the rain, which had now begun to pour down, drenching everything until the decks were slippery as ice, and the sails, holding the wind better, drew every pound of wind that struck them, when suddenly Herbert called out in a voice that was heard far above the shrieking of the wind:

"Take in your staysail, stand by the fore and main-sheets!" And when the response came. "All ready, sir," he jammed the wheel hard up, the sheets were loosened, and after tumbling and tossing about for a few moments the *Gleam* flew off before the wind, headed for Governor's Island.

"She bears down by the head a little, sir; had we not better lift her a little?" said Leon, coming aft at that moment.

"Yes, you had better lighten her; set the flying jib, and see what that will do."

So in a few moments the immense clouds of canvas flew far out into the air, looking like some huge white balloon, when the beneficial effect of this maneuver was instantly apparent, for instead of plowing nose under through the waves, the schooner rode them lightly, while her speed was materially increased.

And so they flew on past Governor's Island, and then the sheets were flattened

down, the helm put down a little, and changing their course they dashed off into the waters of East River, flying past the cities of New York and Brooklyn, Herbert handling the wheel like an ancient mariner, and threading his way among the numerous craft that crowded the waters with consummate skill.

The jib and staysail had again been set, as well as the two topsails, and the reefs having been tshaken out of fore and mainsail, they flashed along like a vision, causing more than one old salt, leisurely proceeding up the river with everything double-reefed, to shake his head and mutter:

"Them yo'tsmen must be crazy, carryin' such canvas in such a blow as this; not, do you think, Jim?"

"Crazy as loons," invariably replied Jim, shifting his quid and giving his canvas trowsers an extra hitch.

The swirling currents and eddies of Hell Gate were safely passed, Herbert knowing every inch of the waters, and on they flew until the storm blew itself out; and just as the first faint streaks of the dawn appeared in the east, the schooner shot into a little cove, sheltered on three sides by lofty cliffs, was thrown up into the wind; and the anchor being dropped, while the chain rattled through the hawse-hole, the "*Gleam*" lay gently rocking on the still waters of the little bay, while she was stripped of her canvas as if by magic.

And then all hands had breakfast, after which Herbert turned in for a nap, leaving instructions to be called at eight bells—noon—when quiet settled down over the scene as the tired boys slept away the fatigue and excitement of the night, leaving two of their number as an anchor-watch.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. FERRETT APPEARS.

AT ten o'clock, the next morning, Beatrice was at the door of the office of Ferrett & Company, as a small tin sign overhead announced, and having knocked timidly, entered in response to the answer from within, and, advancing a few steps toward the window where an elderly gentleman was seated at a desk, writing—

"Is this the office of Ferrett & Company?" she asked, bashfully.

"It was, Miss—Miss—" and then, seeing that she did not intend to help him out, he continued: "The company is no more; in fact, I may say that it is defunct, as it were; yes, that is it—'defunct'," and he repeated the word a half-a-dozen times, as if decidedly pleased with it.

"But, if the company is—'defunct'," repeated the girl, unable to refrain from smiling, "does Mr. Ferrett survive?"

"He does, Miss—Miss— Excuse me, but will you not tell me your name, and—excuse me again, will you not be seated?" and whirling around, he was beside her with a comfortable arm-chair before she thoroughly realized that he had risen.

"Thank you, sir," returned she, as she seated herself, and then ignoring his first question, she asked a second time about Mr. Ferrett.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Ferrett, certainly, to be sure. So you wish to see Mr. Ferrett: and about what may I ask, or rather inquire?"

"That I will tell Mr. Ferrett himself," answered Beatrice, somewhat annoyed by the old gentleman's persistent inquiries.

"Yes, yes, just so. In other words, you wish to see Mr. Ferrett personally?"

"Precisely."

"Exactly; then I will tell him, or rather inform him of the fact: yes, that is it; will inform him."

And grinning and chuckling, the old gentleman toddled across the room and disappeared through a door which evidently opened into another and a private office, while Beatrice, left to herself, arose and looked out for a few moments on the busy street below; but, wearying of this, she turned and began to examine the room and its contents, which were, however, not of much interest, except a glass case that stood in one corner, filled with all kinds of murderous-looking knives, clubs, pistols, revolvers, dirks, and brass and steel knuckles, each of which was labeled with a date and a name, and a note regarding its capture.

A complete set of burglar's tools, the use

of many of which were, of course, unknown to the girl, was arranged on one of the shelves, while a dozen short pieces of rope were scattered about in the cabinet marked with the names of the different murderers they had helped to hang.

"A nice collection, Miss Beatrice, do you not think so?" said a quiet voice at her elbow, as she stood shuddering before these witnesses of "man's inhumanity to man." She was decidedly startled, for she had heard no one enter the room or approach. She turned and looked sharply at her questioner.

Behind her stood a young man, from twenty-six to twenty-eight years old, with a pale, sad, melancholy face, and large, black eyes, that seemed to pierce through and through her.

He was clean-shaven, and dressed in an unusually well-fitting coat, vest and trowsers, that were evidently the work of an ultra-fashionable tailor, while his neatly-gloved hands and well-polished boots denoted that he was something of a dandy, and extremely careful of his personal appearance.

Tall and well-built, he was a striking-looking man, and one who would have attracted attention in any gathering, for he was decidedly handsome and fine-looking.

"Pardon me for startling you, Miss Beatrice," continued the stranger, "but I wanted to test your nerve, and can congratulate you upon it."

"Never in your life before have you, in all probability, found yourself face to face with such a collection as that before you, and most ladies, with their nerves excited by looking at those knives, each one rusty with human blood, those pistols, that have rung out many a death-note, those bits of rope, that have aided in choking many a murderer into eternity, most ladies, I say, would, on being suddenly addressed as you, have shrieked with fear, while many of them would have fainted."

"Thank you, sir, for the compliment; but can I not see Mr. Ferrett?"

"You can—in fact, you have."

"I have?"

"You have, Miss Beatrice."

"How did you learn my name?" cried the girl, her surprise, for a moment, getting the better of her desire to see Mr. Ferrett.

"By a simple course of inductive reasoning, Miss Beatrice. You insert an advertisement in the *Herald*; you receive a note requesting you to call here at ten o'clock; at ten o'clock you are here: your name was given as 'Beatrice W.' in that advertisement; do you see how simple it is?"

"Very simple, indeed; but now, to return to my first question about Mr. Ferrett. Was that he whom I first saw?"

"It was."

"And he did not wish to be known?"

"Precisely."

"Then I cannot see him again?"

"Oh, yes. If you will resume your seat I will explain, or rather elucidate; yes, yes, that is it: 'elucidate!'"

Like an electric shock the truth flashed upon Beatrice at these last words, which were repeated in the mumbling tones of the old gentleman she had first seen, and she realized that he and the young man now before her were one and the same.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Ferrett, upon your admirable disguise, for I should never have penetrated it had you not given me the clew."

"But, tell me; do I see you now as your *real* self, or is this only another disguise adopted with the intention of mystifying me further?"

"You see me now as I always appear to the outer world, when I am known as Mr. Farrington—being only Mr. Ferrett here."

"Then, Mr. Farrington, can you aid me in procuring honorable employment?"

"I can."

"And you will?"

"If you think you could perform the duties required of you."

"And they are—?"

"To become a detective and do a detective's work, which, in your case, will be light, pleasant and profitable."

"Can I learn something about that terms now?"

"You can; and if we fail to come to time, consider these words as never spoken."

"I am on the track of a plot so deep-laid,

so wide-spreading, that I need all of the skill I can procure to aid me in unraveling it, and I particularly need a young woman who will enter a family that is under suspicion, there to perform the duties of a maid to a young lady.

"If you decide to enter upon the work you are to keep your eyes open, watch every one who comes to the house and suspect every visitor, for the young lady's family is closely connected with a large number of the leaders of society, and their house is a very gay one."

"And you think that I can do this?"

"I firmly believe it; at least you can try."

"Then, sir, I consent; when shall I apply for my new position, and what is the address?"

"Go there this afternoon. Here are the name and the address."

And, looking at the engraved card Beatrice read:

"MISS RENIE RIVERS,
Westview Cottage,
Bay Ridge."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DETECTIVE'S STORY.

"A *VERY* pretty name," said Beatrice, as she read the card again.

"Yes; and a very pretty girl, and as good and kind as she is lovely."

Beatrice looked half-quizzically at the speaker as he thus warmly praised Miss Rivers, but he, comprehending instantly, shook his head and replied, laughing:

"Nothing of that sort, I assure you, Miss Beatrice. I am only a Platonic admirer of the young lady, for my affections are otherwise engaged."

"But before you go I must give you a few points regarding the history of the case that you are about to investigate:

"About two years ago, in a mansion on Fifth avenue, a gentleman was found dead in his bed, a dagger that was known to be his planted in his heart, and his right hand clasping the bronze handle of the weapon. A case of suicide, brought about by financial troubles, the verdict of the coroner's jury said, and the world was content with this verdict."

"Calm yourself, Miss Beatrice; it is of your father that I am speaking, and it is but justice that his daughter should know what I believe to be the truth, and, knowing it, aid me in solving the mystery that shrouds this sad affair!"

The girl sat, white as a sheet, and trembling as trembles the aspen leaf in the summer breeze, but uttered never a word. But gradually recovering her composure, she motioned to the detective to proceed with his narrative.

"In my capacity as a detective," continued Ferrett, or Farrington, "I was called in to examine the surroundings, but could discover nothing that would lead me to think that any other hand than the dead man's had been concerned in his death."

"And thus I had nothing to offer to the coroner's jury that could affect their verdict, but after they had retired I again approached the bed, for I seemed fascinated by the idea that I would yet obtain some clew, and as I bent over the body, I was startled to see, on the little finger of the right hand, a slight red streak that was almost imperceptible."

"It seemed like a small thing, yet it is from just such small things that we detectives gain such great results. I immediately began to investigate, when I found that what I had thought was a faint streak of blood was, in reality, a scratch such as a pin would make."

"With some difficulty I unclasped the stiffened hand, and found, lying in the palm, this."

And taking from his pocket a leather case, he opened it and placed on the table a morsel of wood, which resembled the stem of a rose, through which was thrust a bent pin, and which Beatrice examined curiously and reverently as being a relic from her dead father's hand.

"This pin, you will notice, Miss Beatrice, is bent in a peculiar manner, as if some one had been holding it in their mouth and crushed it by suddenly clinching the teeth; let me illustrate."

Mr. Ferrett—as he must be called in his office—then took a pin, placed it in the side of his mouth and crushed it with his eye-tooth, and then handed it to the girl, who compared it with the other and then said:

"This you have handed me is bent at nearly right angles while the other is nearly straight."

"Well, straighten this one as nearly as you can by bending it back with your fingers, and then compare the two."

Beatrice did as he requested and then uttered a cry of astonishment, for the two pins looked almost exactly alike, each having a shoulder in it near the head, while, on examining them closely, she could see that their polished surfaces were jagged and torn where they had been bitten.

"Like a sudden shock the conviction flashed upon me that I had found a clew from which most important results might be reached. I concealed the pin and morsel of rose stem in my pocket, again clasped the hand about the dagger, and withdrew."

"You may ask me why I did not communicate my discovery to the authorities? I will tell you why I concealed it."

"Had I done so, the assassin, if there was one, would have instantly been put on his guard and no result would have been reached, for I had not even formed a theory regarding this discovery, and I would have been laughed at by every one without accomplishing anything; so I preferred to guard my secret and work in the dark."

"And for two years I have not made one step in advance, and no one but you knows that I am still at work on this famous 'Mysterious Waters Case' as I call it, but which was long ago forgotten by all, so quickly do such things pass from the public memory here in this great city."

"I have discovered absolutely nothing, and you will have a clear road to follow if you undertake this matter."

"If I undertake it! Do you think for an instant that I would hesitate when an opportunity to wash this stain from my father's name offers itself to me?"

"Mr. Ferrett, you did not know my father, or you would not doubt his daughter!"

"Very well, then; and something tells me that you will track the man to the gallows; for that he deserves to hang even you will admit, tender-hearted as you are."

"But I must tell you that if I have discovered nothing I have my suspicions, and these you must verify. As sure as your father lies in his grave, unavenged, so surely he was murdered, stabbed to death as he slept, by the hand of an assassin; and just as surely believe that you will convict that assassin—the man who is guilty of this crime!"

Then, speaking abruptly, he asked:

"Do you know Mervyn Temple, or his father, Vane Temple?"

"Vane Temple called on me last night to offer my brother and myself a home and a settled income, and ended by shamefully insulting my father."

"And was thrown into the street for his insolence!"

"You know that?"

"I know that and more: I know everything that has happened to you during the past two years or more."

"And why did you not make yourself known to me before and let me aid you?"

"That I cannot tell you now, and I beg of you do not insist on an answer to that question to-day. At some future time I can tell you."

"Just as you wish, but—"

"Excuse me, one thing more: do not endeavor to dissuade your brother, when he proposes any expedition, or, coming to see you, tells you of any of his plans: *he is acting under my orders!*"

"Herbert!"

"Yes, Miss Beatrice, and has been doing so, for a week or two past."

"And how shall I explain to him—"

"Your leaving home?"

"Yes."

"Leave that to me. Now we will go and have some lunch; then I will show you the house where you can meet Miss Rivers, for she is in the city this afternoon; or, rather I had better tell you where it is, for you had best go there alone."

"And what shall I say to her?"

"Simply that you are recommended to her by Mrs. Simpkins, and hand her this."

"And this is?"

"A letter of recommendation from your last employer."

"Thank you. I see that you have anticipated everything. I will return home and change my dress somewhat, and will lunch there. What is the number of the house and on what street is it?"

"You will find Miss Rivers at No.—Fifth avenue—*your old home!*"

CHAPTER IX.

EN GARDE!

THE announcement startled Beatrice for a moment, but, she quickly became calm, and asked the detective:

"How does it happen that I will find her there? Do friends of hers reside in that house?"

"Vane Temple lives there, and Mervyn Temple is engaged to Miss Rivers, who lunches there to-day with Mrs. Temple."

"Vane Temple living in my father's home? Then, Mr. Ferret, I am doubly assured that he is what my father accused him of being."

"What was that?" asked the detective, intensely interested.

"A swindler and an embezzler. You know, of course, that my father and Vane Temple were partners in business?"

"Certainly. Go on."

"Well, one evening my father came to me—it was the last evening that I ever saw him alive—and said:

"Beatrice, I wish you to remain in the library, this evening, concealed by the *portiere*, and listen to what Mr. Temple says, for I may want a witness. Be quiet as a mouse, for he must not suspect your presence."

"My brother was absent at the time, or he undoubtedly would have been chosen to do this instead of me."

"So, immediately after dinner I hurried to the library and there secreted myself. Soon after, the door-bell rung, and Vane Temple was ushered in, seating himself in an easy-chair and awaiting the entrance of my father, which was not long in following."

"I need not repeat their entire conversation, but at length my father arose and said, bitterly:

"You wish to introduce that dishonorable son of yours on Wall street as my partner! Never, sir! never!"

"Never will I allow the honorable name that my father left me to be trailed in the dust as it would be by him!"

"And further: I asked you to call this evening that I might inform you that to-morrow I will cause to be published the notice of the dissolution of our partnership, for I have discovered alterations in the books—skillfully made, I will admit—which brand you as a swindler, an embezzler, and a defaulter to a large amount, and these alterations make it appear that I am the thief, not you."

"To-morrow I will publish you to the world for what you are, will expose your forgeries and your thefts, and will, if there is any law in the land, cause you to disgorge!"

"Leave my house, and never set foot in it again. I will send my lawyer to you to-morrow."

"And like a whipped cur, Vane Temple slunk to the door, and then, turning, shook his clinched hand at my father and cried:

"I am desperate and you had better not press me too far, or—"

"The rest was lost as my father slammed the door in his face, when I crept out, thoroughly frightened."

"My father told me that there was nothing to remember, as Temple had not made the admissions that he had expected and hoped to wring from him, and kissing me good-night, bade me leave him."

"The next morning he was found lying dead in his bed, and that day the rumor was bruited abroad that he had committed suicide on account of financial distresses, and that he had wrongfully used the bank's funds."

"This rumor, I have no doubt, was spread by the Temples, and every one sympathized with them, for Vane Temple's fortune was said to have been lost in the wreck."

"But soon it became known that some

lucky investments he had made in western mining stock had repaid him a thousand-fold, and that he was again rich, far richer than he had ever been before."

"And you never told any one of all this; never sought redress?"

"What could I, a poor, penniless girl, do against them and their millions?"

"No, I have waited, and pray Heaven, the hour of vengeance may be rapidly drawing near!"

"I am more glad than I can say that no one knows of what you have told me, for these men, who are now doubtless enjoying your father's fortune, imagine themselves perfectly secure and are completely off their guard."

"But, what object could Vane Temple have in offering a home to my brother and to me? And why should he mention that he had thought of me as a possible wife for his son?"

"Only planning to make everything perfectly safe, that was all; but I hope you sent him off with his ears tingling."

"I did, indeed, for I called him a thief and the murderer of my father!"

"What!" and the detective fairly sprung from his seat; "you do not mean to say that you put him on his guard that way?"

"He only thought that I meant to repeat what I had said when he first offered me shelter—that he had drawn my father into speculations which had proven fatal and thus driven him to die by his own hand rather than, disgraced, face the world again."

"For, even then, wild with grief as I was, I did not wish to let him know that I had heard the conversation of a few evenings previous."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the detective, much relieved as he heard the explanation.

"But I must not detain you any longer, or you will miss your future mistress. Take this case with you containing the bent pin, and guard it carefully, and remember! it is our only clew to the assassin!"

And going into the other room he returned in a moment with a small sachel which he handed to her, saying:

"You had better make use of the contents of this, before you call on Miss Rivers, for you might meet some one you know there."

"And should you come face to face with either of the Temples, restrain yourself, and do not fail to recollect that one false step may prove fatal to all our plans."

"Whenever you want to communicate with me—and let me hear from you occasionally, without fail—write to R. W. Farrington, General Delivery, Post-Office. I will call every day and inquire."

"And do not keep any letters you have, particularly the one you received from me last evening, but destroy them all."

"Your future name is Linda Reade, and by this name you are mentioned in that letter of introduction."

"I will not go out with you; lower your vail and take the first stage up-town. Good-by and good luck!"

And, as the door closed behind her, Ferrett muttered to himself:

"Now, Vane Temple, *En Garde!*"

CHAPTER X.

THE "TRAMP."

AT noon, precisely, eight bells clanged out on the quiet summer air—for the storm had entirely subsided and scarce a ripple disturbed the placid surface of Long Island Sound—Herbert leaped from his berth, and going on deck, went forward and, removing his clothes, leaped overboard and enjoyed a pleasant swim, his example being followed by all of the boys, who splashed and dove about like so many porpoises.

When they were once more dressed and mustered aft, their leader spoke to them:

"It is now time, boys, for me to tell you of the plan I have on hand so that we may all set to work diligently to prepare for our race."

"The regatta takes place to-morrow and we will have no rest from now until it is finished, for we are going to sail in that race and, if I am not very much mistaken, we are going to win it."

"Our success will depend largely on prompt obedience to orders, for we must

handle the yacht like old sailors if we want to get all of the speed of which she is capable, out of her."

"So now, to work! In the first place, I want every inch of her repainted. You will find brushes and paints forward, stowed away by the bitts. Paint her thoroughly six of you on a side and make the job as botchy as you please, only be careful that every spot of white is covered, and when you have her well daubed with the black paint, take some of the brown color you will find and go over her again making her as streaked and weather-beaten as you can."

"Leon, you and one of the quartermasters unship the bowsprit and replace it with that splintered old spar we brought, and then house the topmasts and paint them a dirty black, and when you are through with that unbend the sails and replace them with the old ones we have; make the craft look as disreputable as you can and disguise her completely."

He continued thus to give directions after the boys had gone to work, lending a hand here, giving a word of advice there and hurrying everybody on board so that when darkness came on the change had been effected and the saucy Gleam looked like a veritable tramp of the sea.

Her house had been covered with black canvas and her decks littered up, while the binnacle, the figurehead, the port davits had been removed and the wheel replaced by a battered looking one, while the dirty, mildewed sails hung from spars that seemed a world too heavy for the hull.

Getting into a boat, Herbert rowed off a little distance and could scarcely restrain a cry of delight as he saw how changed the schooner was, and then pulling up under her stern, he fastened over the name of the Gleam a board that had painted on it the disreputable name "The Tramp."

"There, boys," he cried as he surveyed the work, "I don't believe that any one will recognize the yacht and think that we may sail right through the fleet without detection."

"I think so too," added Leon, who was in the boat with Herbert; "that idea of yours of tacking canvas, stuffed out with horse-hair, under her bows and counter, alters her shape completely, and she now looks like a Dutch galleon or a Chinese junk more than anything else, and besides it won't interfere with her speed."

"Not at all, for it is far above her water line, and her cut-water is left untouched; and now, boys, a few shovelfuls of mud splashed over her will fix things up completely and then tumble below and get on your togs."

And when the moon came up, a more disreputable-looking set than that scattered about the decks of the schooner, it would have been difficult to find.

Ragged, shoeless, with dirty faces and torn hats, under the rim of which uncombed hair straggled down over their faces, many of them in bare feet and shirt-sleeves, while others wore coats a world too large for them, they looked like the sweepings from the purlieus of the city, and could no more be recognized as the natty crew that had captured the yacht, than the "Gleam" could be identified under the disguise of "The Tramp."

Then the boats belonging to the "Gleam" were lowered and taken ashore, where they were concealed from view, the boat the boys owned being swung up on the port davits.

Then, about midnight, a gentle breeze blowing from off-shore, the sails were hoisted and "The Tramp" glided slowly out into the Sound and then was headed nearly due West, arriving not long after off New York, sailing out into the harbor and standing off and on until daylight, when she was headed straight for Bay Ridge and sailed around for some time, finally being hove to, when she remained rocking on the lazy ripples, looking like some old, battered, worn-out cyster boat that had long since seen its best days and would look much better if lying twenty fathoms deep beneath the waves.

While she lay there, her bows pointing into the eye of the wind, preparations for the regatta were being rapidly carried forward on the other yachts anchored about, and boats were plying in every direction, carrying visitors and owners to different craft and loaded

with eatables and drinkables of every description.

The scene was a brilliant one, and as the day wore on crowds of ladies arrived to witness the start, and the club-house was gayly decorated with flags and bunting, while most of the yachts carried the club signal and the private signal of their owners, they drifting lazily out in the light breeze that was, however, rapidly increasing in strength, as the sun began to make its influence felt.

Soon a saucy little steam launch came puffing out and steamed about from yacht to yacht, giving orders, finally approaching close to the Tramp and stopping for a moment, the commodore—for it was evidently he, judging from the flag the craft carried—called out:

"Schooner, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Herbert, stepping to the side and holding on to the standing rigging, which had been painted a dirty green.

"What are you doing about here? Down with your helm and clear out!"

"Not jest yet," replied Herbert, clapping his disreputable and torn straw hat still further on the back of his head.

"We don't set sail until ther startin'-gun air fired. We air a-goin' ter sail in ther race, we air."

"You ought to have started the day before yesterday, then," came a voice from the port side, and turning, Herbert saw that a trim built schooner had run up close to him, and lay hove to close under his quarter. "Did you ever see such an old hulk, Mervyn?" continued the speaker, addressing a young man who was seated on a camp-stool near by.

"Never! She looks as though she might have been in the oyster trading business for the past century or two, and is probably slower than that most laggard of all things—human justice."

"Yer may think she air slow, but I'll jes' bet yer we kin beat your boat."

"And how much would you bet, young fellow?" asked Mervyn Temple, lazily, not recognizing the nut-brown face and dark curls that shaded it.

"I hain't got no big pile, but I kin raise a hunderd."

"You have plenty of pluck, and yet you need a lesson. We will give you thirty minutes' allowance and then beat you around Sandy Hook Lightship and back here, and I'll put up a thousand against your hundred," replied Temple, who, his friends said, would gamble with a bootblack if he could find no one else to bet with.

"Hyar's yer hunderd!" coolly replied the boy as he tossed a roll on the other boat, "an' if ther captin' there'll hold ther stakes, I'm a-willin'," and he nodded toward the owner of the schooner, the Curlew.

"Oh, Mervyn, don't rob the boy," protested the latter, but Herbert interrupted him:

"I'll take ther chances, sir!" he cried, "an' ef I win I'll claim my boodle, an' ef I lose, han' it over to ther gentleman there."

And the owner of the Curlew, seeing that there was no use arguing the question, waved to his steersman to fall off, as the preparatory gun was fired, while Mervyn Temple, taking a roll of notes from his pocket, counted out a thousand dollars, and handed it to his friend Roberts without a word.

Herbert's face grew triumphant as he saw that Mervyn Temple had not the slightest suspicion that the Gleam lay not a dozen yards from him!

CHAPTER XI.

A BORN ACTRESS.

LEAVING the office and closing the door after her, Beatrice Waters, stopping for a moment to drop her vail, which was thick enough to prevent any one recognizing her, went on down the stairs, stepped out on the sidewalk and almost ran into Vane Temple, who was lounging down-town, having just finished his lunch.

He cast an indifferent glance toward her, and walked on, while the girl inwardly thanked the detective for having cautioned her to cover her face, stopped a stage, and was soon jolting up-town through the crowded street.

Getting out at Twenty-fifth street, she walked hurriedly home, and, going to Mrs.

Morton's room, asked her for a cup of tea and a light lunch to be brought to her room.

"And, Mrs. Morton," she added, "won't you come up in about half an hour, and bring the lunch yourself, for I want to see you very particularly about a most important matter."

"Certingly, my dear certingly; which I will be werry glad to bring up the reflection, and see you eat it, too, for, according to my mind, you don't eat enough to keep a canary bird alive."

"And be sure and make enough tea for both of us, Mrs. Morton, for I invite you to lunch with me to-day."

"Law sakes, Miss Trixie, it wouldn't do for the likes of me to be a-sittin' down and eatin' at the same table with you."

"Well, this time don't count," cried the young girl, merrily, "and I'll tell you now, so that you cannot refuse: I am going to leave you to-morrow."

"Leave me!" cried the old lady, breathless with astonishment. "Massy sakes, what does the girl mean?" and she looked around the room as if expecting one of the photographs of her numerous deceased husbands to step from its frame and answer her question.

"When you bring up the lunch I will tell you all about it," said Beatrice, thinking that if she thus stimulated her she would be the more likely to hasten, and then left the room.

She was right in her conjecture, for in a wonderfully short time Mrs. Morton appeared, carrying a tray on which was laid a nice little lunch, which she placed on the center stand, and then seated herself in an easy-chair, crying:

"You've give me sech a shock, Miss Trixie, as I ain't had sence my third husband was brought home without ever a head on his shoulders, which it had been cut off by a train o' cars a-runnin' over his neck, w'ile he was breakin' on the fast freight."

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Morton, but when I explain, you will understand everything, and will readily see that it is imperative, and that there is nothing else to be done when duty calls me."

And then sitting down opposite Mrs. Morton, having first pushed the stand in front of her, Beatrice poured out two cups of tea and helped her landlady bountifully, and then told her, after exacting a strict promise of secrecy, all that had occurred during the morning, and relating to her in full what the detective had told her.

When she had finished, Mrs. Morton sat for some time sipping her tea, and finally said:

"It is the Hand of Providence leading you to your father's murderer, and I would be the last on a'ir to advise you different; it is a big thing for a tender young creetur' like you to attempt, but you've got the grit, an' I hope an' pray that you will succeed."

Then, the lunch having been enjoyed while they conversed for some time, Beatrice rose, and opening the sachel that Ferrett had given her, took out a large parcel and two or three smaller ones, and, opening them, displayed their contents on the table.

She was a beautiful girl, her hair of that golden hue which glints like bronze in the sunlight, her eyebrows and lashes as black as night, while her eyes were as blue as violets, and changed their color with her varying emotions until at times they grew nearly black.

Her golden tresses, when unbound, fell far below her waist, and were her chief crown of glory, and when coiled up seemed almost too heavy to be supported on the proud young head that was so firmly set on her well-shaped neck.

Opening the largest parcel, she took from it a beautifully-made wig, which was of a chestnut brown, and so skillfully made that when she fitted it on her head it was impossible to detect the counterfeit, although it was somewhat too snug.

Realizing this, she removed it, and, without hesitation, took from a stand near by a large pair of shears, gathered the masses of her hair in her hand, and, before Mrs. Morton could realize what she was about to do, snipped the scissors once or twice and cut off the beautiful locks close to her head.

It was too late to object, so that, when she handed the shears to her landlady and asked her to trim her hair, Mrs. Morton could only scold a little and then do as she was request-

ed. The wig once more being placed on her short locks, fitted as though it had grown there, and changed her appearance completely.

Nor was this all, for, opening one of the smaller parcels, she found in there a liquid dye, marked "For the face," and applying it with a soft sponge, her clear and rosy complexion disappeared, to be replaced by a dark, brunette-like tint that matched her hair perfectly, and rendered her entirely unrecognizable.

Then she retired to her room, and soon returned, neatly and simply dressed, with a jaunty little bonnet, and gloves that, although somewhat worn, fitted her hands without a crease or wrinkle, so that she presented the appearance of a maid out for a holiday.

And appearing before the astonished Mrs. Morton, she dropped a country courtesy and said to her:

"My name is Linda Reade, Miss, and I come from Mrs. Simpkins."

While the old lady, throwing up her hands in admiration, cried:

"Bless my soul! the girl's a born actress!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE ITALIAN FLOWER-GIRL.

THE Elite Theater was pouring out its crowd of amusement-seekers on the night after the capture of the "Gleam" and the lobby was crowded as the performance was ended and the doors thrown wide open.

Standing near the sidewalk, with a small basket on her arm, stood a young girl of probably nineteen years, whose face was dark and swarthy, whose hair was jet-black and whose eyes glowed with the fires of her sunny land—Italy.

At the bottom of her basket lay half-a-dozen small bouquets, the remnants of what she had brought earlier in the evening, and although she mechanically offered her wares to the outcomers, it was evident that she was paying more attention to their faces than to their purses.

Suddenly her pale cheeks glowed with pleasure, and bending forward, as a well-known figure, elegantly clad, came in view, she murmured in softest Tuscan:

"At last I see him again!"

The gentleman who had attracted her attention was apparently alone, and, catching sight of the girl, he turned away his head and scowled for a moment, and then, realizing that it was impossible to avoid being seen, he smiled blandly, and motioning, almost imperceptibly, to the flower-girl to follow him, he walked out to the pavement, called a cab, and as it drew up to the curb, sprung in and awaited the girl's arrival.

Scarcely had he seated himself when she tripped lightly up and leaped into the carriage as lightly as a young fawn, her basket falling unnoticed at her feet, and sobbing with joy, threw herself into his arms, murmuring:

"Oh, Carlo, my well-beloved, do I then see you once more?"

"Yes, Giacinta," replied the other, laughing, but evidently embarrassed, "in flesh and blood."

"But, Carlo, where hast thou been so long?"

"Wait a moment, Gia'," he returned, and then, leaning out of the window, he directed the driver to take them to a certain house that he designated by street and number.

Then turning to his pretty companion again, he said, caressingly:

"Why, Gia' mine, have you missed me?"

"Have I missed you! Oh, husband of mine, do you not know that every day has been a year, every month a century, since I could not see you every hour during the past sixteen months?"

"Sixteen months! Is it possible that I have been away so long?"

"But you received my letter, Gia'?"

"One solitary letter, in which you told me that you were going to sail for Europe that day and that I must be patient and await your return."

"But you received what I left orders should be sent you every two weeks?"

"Oh, yes, my husband; I have not wanted for money; but what was gold when you were away?"

"For days I have haunted the theater where I first met you, hoping almost against

hope that I would see you, and could scarce believe my eyes when I thought I recognized you."

"And I only returned this morning, and went there in hopes of finding you. I should have come out earlier, but my father was in his store and I could not leave him without his asking questions I could not have easily answered."

"But patience for a short time, Gia', and all will be well, although, my sweetheart, I am compelled to cut down expenses somewhat, and must ask you to give up your beautiful house in the city and go with me to a small place I have bought in the country."

"And you will be with me always?"

"Where should a husband be if not with his own lawful wife?"

"But these long months, Carlo?"

"That was cruel necessity, and by my absence I hoped to retrieve my shattered fortunes that I might no longer be dependent on my father, but braving his wrath—for you know that he is as proud as Lucifer—introduce you to the world that you are so well calculated to adorn."

"But why did you not come to the house, to-day, Carlo?" and there was just a slight suspicion of jealousy in her voice.

"Business and my father kept me occupied until late, and it was only by a lucky chance that I prevailed on the old gentleman to go to the Elite, for he wanted to stop at home and talk to me about my trip."

"He stopped for a moment to speak to Madame Clarevoce, the prime donna of the evening and I slipped out to look for you."

At that moment the cab drew up and the gentleman, apparently relieved to find that his explanations were thus cut short, looked out hastily, and said:

"Here we are at last—I mean already; how the time does fly when with you, *carissima mea*."

"I must leave you now, for I promised father to meet him at the club by eleven or a little after, so must hasten away."

"I may have to leave the city, to-morrow, and cannot probably see you for some days, but be patient, little one, and soon all will be permanently settled."

And stepping out he assisted her to descend from the vehicle and then handed her the basket of flowers which lay on the floor, and as he did so a magnificent diamond he wore on his little finger glinted out in the light of a street lamp near by and attracted her attention.

"Oh, the beautiful ring!" she cried, clapping her hands as enthusiastically as a child; "let me see it, Carlo dear?"

"I cannot take it off, Gia'," he answered, carelessly, "good-night."

Instantly her Southern suspicion and jealousy were aroused, and looking him full in the face, she said, slowly:

"I want that ring to wear until I see you again. I am superstitious, you know, and believe that it will shield me from any evil that may threaten."

"Oh, well, take it, then," he said, carelessly, "but be careful not to lose it," taking it off he slipped it on her forefinger, which it fitted loosely.

Then, turning, after having kissed her, he was about to tell the driver where to take him when she stepped to his side and without a word, fastened a bouquet in his button-hole, pinning it deftly in its place.

"Thank you, child," he repeated, and then telling the coachman to drive him to the Excelsior Club, he kissed his hand to the girl, jumped into the cab and was driven away, while she, slowly ascending the steps of her magnificent residence, shook her head as she looked after the disappearing vehicle and murmured:

"Is Carlo Merton playing me false? I shall soon see, and if he is—"

The clinched teeth and vivid flash from the dark eyes were enough; no other answer was needed.

CHAPTER XIII.

"NIP AND TUCK."

SHORTLY after his parley and wager with the gentleman who was a guest on the Curlew, Herbert, who was looking at the different craft as they sailed about, suddenly heard the boom of the cannon on the hill, and

glancing at his watch, saw that it was within ten minutes of the starting time, so ordered the helm up and directed that the jib should be hoisted so that The Tramp would fall off before the wind, which was blowing steadily from the southwest.

He stood off up the bay and singling out the Curlew from the crowd of schooners and sloops that were hovering about, ran close up to her and then, as the second, or starting gun was fired, sailed away for the line, which he crossed so exactly at the same moment with the rival yacht that there was not an inch difference between them.

And then the boatswain's shrill whistle rung out and the ragged crew of "The Tramp" springing to their posts, in an instant the fore and mainsail and their topsails were set and braced flat as a board, the jib and jib-topsail were sheeted home and the staysail lay straight up and down, while the yacht was pointed almost straight into the eye of the wind and began to race through the water with the speed of a greyhound in pursuit of a hare.

"By George! the boys work well, and that young fellow handles the wheel like a man-of-war's man," cried Roberts, owner of the Curlew, as he watched The Tramp critically, "and I think that he has got your thousand cold, Temple," turning to his guest.

"I guess he has, Clint," replied the other, "that old hulk goes like the wind."

And then, suddenly, he cried:

"Look at the impudence of the young fellow, will you? He has plenty of room to cross our bows, but, by Jove, he seems to want to be polite and is luffing up so that we can go to windward of him!"

And this was the case; The Tramp had forged so far ahead that she could, without the slightest danger of a collision, have crossed in front of the Curlew; but instead of doing that, Herbert threw his boat up into the wind, and allowed the Curlew to go to the windward, while he dropped behind, a courtesy that Mr. Roberts acknowledged by lifting his hat, the salute being returned in kind by Herbert.

The Curlew, favored by the freshening breeze, shot far ahead, and still The Tramp lay, hove to, as if she had abandoned the race, after having so gallantly begun it.

It was soon apparent to those on board the leading craft, however, that it was on account of the wind failing her that the other yacht was unable to sail after them, for the breeze came in streaks, and while here the surface of the water would be blown into dancing ripples by the half gale that blew at times, a hundred rods away the bay was as smooth as glass, and the yachts caught in this calm lay, with drooping sails and flags hanging listlessly from aloft, drifting at the mercy of the tide.

And so the leading yachts sailed bravely on until opposite Coney Island, when, as suddenly as it had sprung up, the breeze died away, and they took their turn in a drifting race that promised to last for hours.

Scratching the mast and whistling for wind and other nautical devices were resorted to in vain, until at length the disgusted owners, officers and crews gave it up as a bad job and sought shelter in the shade of the drooping sails from the beating sun, which now sent its rays down with tremendous and powerful force.

And so they rocked about for some time, Roberts going below into the cabin, where it was decidedly cooler than on deck, and asking his guest to join him; but the latter replied:

"No, thank you, I am interested in the race, and believe that we have got 'em all. You see that we lead everything in the fleet by a couple of miles, at least, and if I am not very much mistaken, we will soon get a breeze from the southeast, which will reach us long before the other yachts feel it."

"Well, I guess you are about right," called up his friend from below, his mouth half-full of a tremendous sardine-sandwich the steward had prepared for him; "but, I say, Merv, you are going to give that boy his money back, ain't you? I wouldn't take it if I were you."

"Give back nothing," returned the other; "if I win I keep, and win I think I will, unless—"

A cry from one of the crew interrupted him, and turning, he looked back and saw

what he always afterward spoke of as the most magnificent sight of his life.

For a stiff breeze had suddenly sprung up from the west, and as it had just reached the yachts that were lying far astern, they had at that moment just begun to feel it, and were now slipping through the water like magic.

The wind freshened, and soon, gliding out from the companion boats, as a winning horse slips out from the other racers as he nears the wire, the disreputable-looking Tramp came racing along, a perfect cloud of canvas, everything drawing aloft and aloft, the enormous sails ballooning far out, and seeming as solid as if carved out of ivory.

Far out in front blew the immense jib, seeming to lift the bow of the yacht so that she seemed to skim over the surface of the water, and not to plow through it, while the fore and mainsails were boomed out, "wing and wing," while on opposite sides the enormous spinnakers spread far aloft, until the boat looked like some huge bird, with outstretched wings, swooping down on the Curlew.

Cries of vexation, rage and disappointment arose on all sides as the crew of the Curlew realized that they were about to lose all of the advantage that they had gained, while in obedience to the sharp orders issued by the sailing-master, sheets were loosened, and every inch of canvas that could draw was spread like lightning.

But in a few moments the hope that they would soon feel the favoring breeze, died out, as the wind fell before The Tramp was within a half a mile of them, yet that ungainly craft had acquired such a headway that before she stopped she had shot over the intervening space of water, and gradually ceased drifting until she lay alongside the Curlew, which had not felt a breath of air, Herbert having steered close alongside the leading yacht.

Lifting his hat to Roberts, who had come on deck at the first intimation of a breeze, the young skipper cried:

"A stern-chase is a long one, cap'n; but we've got thar."

"Yes," growled Temple, "luck has favored you; but the race is not finished yet!"

"No, but it won't be long," replied Herbert, coolly, as he pointed to the southeast, where a long line of dark water showed that a breeze had sprung up in that quarter; "we'll git a wind from you, ef I ain't mistaken," and then turning to his crew he took in his spinnakers and balloon sails, hauled in his sheets and made everything ready for the threatening blow.

But, seeing that it would probably be some time before the squall reached them, Roberts, Temple and a few other guests who were on board, went below and seated themselves at the table where an elegant lunch had been prepared.

CHAPTER XIV.

LINDA READE.

ABOUT four o'clock on the afternoon preceding the yacht-race, a young girl, neatly clad, tripped up the steps of a brown-stone front mansion on Fifth avenue, and gave the door-bell a vigorous pull, and then turning, surveyed a handsome landau that stood in front, to which were harnessed a team of magnificent bays, which were fretting under the curb and champing their bits impatiently, flinging the foam from their lips high in the air as they tossed their shapely heads up and down.

The liveried coachman and footman, the satin-covered cushions of the carriage, the gold-mounted harness—all betokened affluent circumstances on the part of the owner of the equipage, and contrasted sharply with an old, bent crone who wandered by, mumbling and mouthing some incoherent words from her toothless gums.

But at that moment the door was opened by the servant, and the young visitor turned and asked him if Miss Rivers was there.

"She is, miss, and if you'll walk into the parlor I will tell her that you wish to see her. What name, please?"

"Say that Miss Reade is here, and give her this note from Mrs. Simpkins."

"Oh, Simpkins," answered the domestic, changing his tone and demeanor suddenly, for he had evidently thought the visitor a

person of some importance. "Wait in the hall, and w'ot did you say your name was, again?"

"Miss Reade."

"Miss Reade," returned the other, superciliously, "an' w'ot is the fu'st name?"

"Linda."

"Well, Linder, my gurl, you wait 'ere until I noterfy Miss Rivers of yer harrival."

And the flunky stalked off, swelling with importance and looking as red as a turkey-cock, leaving the young girl standing in the hall, blushing with anger and almost inclined to leave the house, so great was her indignation.

But on second thoughts she quieted down, remembering that she had deliberately chosen this path and must follow it to the bitter end, despite the impertinences that she realized would be showered on her by her fellow servants.

She was not kept waiting long, for there soon sounded at the top of the stairs the soft sweep of a dress, and a dainty little figure, all clad in white, with flowing golden hair and fair girlish face came tripping down, and, rushing up to the visitor impetuously, seized her by both hands and cried, impulsively:

"What are you doing, standing here in the hall? I'll warrant it is all the fault of that stupid servant; come into the library."

Miss Reade, rejoicing at this warm welcome, followed the young lady without a word, and the library door being thrown wide open she, at the invitation of Miss Rivers, stepped into the room, but instantly stopped, confused, as she found herself in the presence of two gentlemen, both of whom rose as she entered, and seemed waiting for an explanation.

But Miss Rivers was equal to the emergency, and coming to the rescue, cried:

"Mr. Temple, Mervyn, this is Miss Reade, who will, I hope, be with me for some time," and as the two—father and son—bowed, Linda, or Miss Beatrice Waters, stepped boldly forward into the full glare of the light that shone from the open window, and murmured a few words, politely.

It was a severe test, yet she never faltered, for she realized that now or never was the time to see if her disguise was complete, and if Mr. Temple would recognize her—she had never before met his son, so knew that she had nothing to fear from him.

The elder Temple gazed at her a moment, coldly and critically, and then with some passing remark about the weather, turned to Miss Rivers, while Mervyn Temple still continued to look admiringly at Miss Reade and endeavored to enter into conversation with her, being, however, repelled coldly but courteously.

"Well, my little Renie," said Mr. Temple, "what do you mean by breaking in on us in the midst of our business conversations and disturbing us this way?"

"I did not know you were here, and besides, I do not believe a word of all this about 'business,' for I've no doubt that you were talking about the opera or the theater, or something far removed from 'business.'"

"Why, you little vixen, do you thus dare contradict your future father-in-law? Mervyn, my son, you must teach Miss Renie better manners than this."

"Will you two never stop pretending to quarrel?" laughed his son; "really, father, you are incorrigible and Renie is worse."

"Take care!" cried the young girl, holding up a warning finger, "or I will call Miss Reade to my rescue, and what can you do against two of us?"

"With such a combination of youth and beauty opposed to us, we would have to strike our flags and surrender at discretion," replied the elder Temple, bowing.

"Then retire in good order, for I want to talk to Miss Reade."

"Oh, you are a regular little martinet, and we ought to rebel, but we really do not dare to. Come, father, we will leave the two young ladies alone, and will go for a drive."

"Mind that you are back in an hour," cried Miss Rivers, "for I am going to ask Miss Reade to take a drive in the Park. You'll go, will you not, Mervyn?"

"With much pleasure."

"And am I not included in the invitation?" asked the elder gentleman.

"Of course."

"Then we will be back in about three quarters of an hour, for I know that it will take you at least fifteen minutes to get ready after the carriage is announced."

"You are perfectly—" but the door slammed before she could finish, and as the two gentlemen escaped into the hall she could hear them laughing outside as they walked away.

"You seem to be on very pleasant terms with your 'future father-in-law,' as he calls himself," said Miss Reade, as she seated herself in response to the other's invitation.

"Oh, yes, indeed! We are the best friends in the world, although we seem to be continually quarreling; it is not serious, though, and none of our shafts are barbed."

"It is certainly a very pleasant state of affairs; and Mrs. Temple, I hope that your relations with her are equally cordial."

"Mrs. Temple died some years ago, leaving Mr. Temple with one son—Mervyn—whom you just saw."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and as you are to be with me, I hope, indefinitely, I may as well tell you now what you already know, probably—I am engaged to Mervyn."

"I congratulate you, sincerely."

"And now as to yourself; you can never be my maid; you are too nice for that; but if you will come and live with me, rather as a companion and friend than anything else, I am sure we can get along together, and to render your position more independent I will ask you to help with my sewing, of which I shall have, oh! lots; you will, though, be considered as one of the family and there will be nothing menial about your position; what do you say? Will you come?"

"Come? oh, so gladly, but you are too, too kind! how can I ever thank you?" And she burst into a flood of tears in which the other joined her, so they had an eminently satisfactory womanly cry, together, which seemed to do them a world of good and watered the plant of their friendship until it blossomed like the rose.

CHAPTER XV.

JEALOUSY AND SUSPICION.

GIA' stood for some time watching the rapidly-disappearing carriage, and at length, when it was lost in the crowd of vehicles that went and came in every direction, she turned and, opening the front door with a latch-key, entered the house and proceeded up-stairs to the front room, where her maid was awaiting her.

Surely, if handsome surroundings and perfect comfort could make a person happy, Gia' Gisela, as she had been called, Mrs. Merton as she was now known, should have been perfectly contented, for the room that she called her boudoir was crowded with all of the luxuriousness that a dainty woman loves to surround herself with.

Easy-chairs and lounges in profusion, bric-a-brac that crowded the brackets and cabinets hung on the walls, an almost priceless collection of Dresden and Sevres china, lace curtains and elegant draperies hung about with reckless extravagance, all combined to give the room an appearance of comfort that appertains only to the apartments of the wealthy, while magnificent paintings, engravings and etchings were scattered about the walls, and gave a finish to the room without which no boudoir is complete.

Having slipped on an evening gown and changed her shoes for a tiny pair of slippers, Gia' dismissed her maid with an indolent gesture, and then, drawing an easy-chair to the window, sunk into the embrace of its soft cushions and looked out into the night, her brows contracted as if in deep thought, her hands loosely clasped in her lap.

For some time she sat thus, meditating until, as she raised her hand to push back a stray lock from her forehead, the flash of the diamond in the ring that Carlo Morton had given her, caught her eye, and she started as if she had been stung.

Slipping the gem from her finger, she arose, and walking toward the chandelier, examined it closely, turning it in every direction and admiring the different hued lights as they sparkled from its cut surface, and then, as a thought struck her, she held the ring up and examined the inside of the golden hoop, and as her eye caught an in-

scription inside, she stood as if turned to stone, while the blood left her face, which became pale and colorless.

For on the inside of the yellow band were engraved these words and letters:

"MIZPAH. RENIE TO MERVYN,
JAN. 1, 18—."

With staring eyes and parted lips she stood for some time, while the blood surged back from her heart, and her usually pale cheeks glowed red with passion, rage and jealousy.

"'Renie to Mervyn!' she muttered. 'What does this mean?'"

"Is he playing me false, and has he married me under a false name?"

"Who is 'Renie,' and who is 'Mervyn'? That is what I will discover before I am many days older, and if you, Carlo Merton, have deceived me, you will curse the day when first my path crossed yours."

"'Renie—Mervyn'! The coupling of these two names means something—that this first word 'Mizpah' ought to solve; but what does that word mean?"

I have no means of learning to-night, and must wait until to-morrow.

"Why did he not wish to give me this ring? Is there some tie connected with it, some promise given not to remove it from his finger that caused him to hesitate? There is some secret here, and that is what caused his embarrassment. Is he playing a double game? is there some other woman who has come between us two?"

She was now pacing up and down the room like a caged lioness, and was blazing with jealousy and anger.

"For sixteen long months I have not seen him, and he says that he only returned from Europe this morning; but—" and she stopped and pressed her temples with her hands, and then turning, she hurried to the bell-cord and pulled it as if she would tear it down, and seated herself once more, and hiding the ring, she awaited the coming of her maid, stilling the beating of her heart, and schooling herself to appear quiet and unconcerned.

Presently her maid entered, a tall, gaunt Italian woman, whose jet-black eyes and hair of the same hue gave a mild aspect to her appearance that was almost forbidding.

"Felice," said Gia', as the servant entered, "I do not feel at all like retiring, and thought that, if you would like to take a walk, we would go out for a short time."

"I am always ready to obey madam's orders."

"Well, then, slip on your hat and I will get ready, and then we will go for a stroll; but, Felice, she continued, as the woman was about to leave the room, "I want to ask you again about what you were telling me this evening before I went out."

"Did you not say that you thought you had seen Mr. Merton about six weeks ago, and that he had dropped a letter that you had handed back to him?"

"Yes, madam, I had gone to the post-office to mail a letter to my friends in Italy, telling them that, thanks to madam's goodness to me, I hoped soon to be able to return, when a gentleman who, I am positive, was Mr. Merton, stepped into the office, took a package of letters from his pocket, and put them in the box."

"But, as he did so, one of them slipped, unperceived, to the floor, and I picked it up and handed it to him, saying:

"'Mr. Merton, you dropped this.'"

"He turned as if struck, but taking off his hat courteously, bowed and replied:

"Thank you very much, but you are mistaken in the person."

"But I knew, or rather thought, that I was not mistaken, until, on returning home, I found that madam had just received a letter from Mr. Merton, dated from Paris and written a week or two previous to that day."

"And did you see the direction on the envelope that he dropped?"

"I only caught a glimpse of the first name, and as it was peculiar I remembered it."

"And that name was?"

"The letter was addressed to Miss Renie something—what I did not see."

The red flush on Gia's face darkened perceptibly, but before she could answer a sound of wheels was heard outside, and looking from the window she saw that a

cab had stopped at the door, and in an instant all of her jealous doubts were dispelled and as the bell rung she flew down stairs and opened the front door, crying:

"It is Carlo, come back to me!"

But as the door flew open she saw that the person standing in the door was not Merton, and faltering she awaited what he might say.

"Beg pardon, mum; but 'ere is a overcoat the gen'leman left in the keb, an' not knowin' where else to take it I brought it here."

"Where did you leave the gentleman?"

"At Twenty-first street and Broadway."

"Thank you, driver, I will see that he gets it; wait a moment," and hurrying upstairs she sent her maid down with a bank-note to hand to the driver for his trouble, carrying the coat with her and throwing it across the back of a chair.

When Felice returned Mrs. Merton said:

"I have changed my mind and will not go out to-night, so you need not wait," and then doubly disappointed she resealed herself, her doubts and fears again returning.

But her eyes were constantly attracted by the overcoat, and at length, unable to resist the feeling that there she would find the clew that she sought, she rose, took up the garment and felt in the pocket.

A pair of gloves, crumpled up, had been carelessly thrust into one pocket but in the other was something heavy that next attracted her attention, and drawing it out she found that it was a pair of opera-glasses, inclosed in a leather case, which she opened and then took out the glasses, which she examined admiringly and was about to replace when a card in the bottom of the case attracted her attention and drawing it out she read on the enameled surface,

"MERVYN TEMPLE,"

and then, with a loud cry, fell fainting to the floor, grasping the card in her clinched hand.

Her suspicions were almost verified!

CHAPTER XVI.

A NAUTICAL KNOCK-DOWN.

"I NEVER saw the wind so fluctuating and so variable as it is to-day," remarked Roberts, when they were seated at the table, to the number of half a dozen; "it seems as if we would not have time to finish the race before dark, and if matters do not change pretty soon, I shall propose to 'bout ship and set sail for Bay Ridge."

"And a most wise suggestion it would be, Clint," assented Temple, "unless, indeed, that puff from the southeast means something; suppose you call and see what the prospect is."

"All right. On deck there!" and in response to the call the sailing-master stuck his head down and cried: "Ay, ay, sir."

"Any prospect of a breeze?"

"No, sir, that puff from the sou'east has died away like the rest of them, and I don't see nuthin' ahead but bafflin' winds."

"Well, keep her as she is until we finish our lunch, and then, if there is no change, we will give it up; there is no use drifting about here all night."

"Very well, sir," and the sailor withdrew.

"Steward, open up everything here," said Roberts, a moment after; "it is intensely warm down here, and we may as well have all the air we can get."

And in a moment more the dead lights were unscrewed and thrown wide open, when the cabin became somewhat cooler and the atmosphere more supportable.

So they chatted on gayly, when, suddenly, the Curlew began to heel over to port and the water to ripple along her side.

"Good!" cried Temple, "here is a breeze at last! I never knew it to fail."

"Never knew what to fail?"

"I never knew a time when I went below to a meal that the wind did not spring up."

"Well, this is a pretty good breeze, look out for your plates!" cried Roberts, as the vessel keeled over more and more, and the dishes began to slide over to port.

And just then the orders rung out, on deck:

"Let go your fore and jib sheets!" but still the Curlew heeled over more and more until she lay nearly on her beam ends, while

those of the party who were seated to leeward were thrown backward to the floor and there lay helpless, the dishes sliding down on top of them in a crashing mass.

And as she kept going over, the other members of the party were thrown headlong over the table, landing on top of the others and unable to rise, while the water came pouring in the lee port-hole and deluged everything.

It seemed as if she must inevitably capsize, and had she done so, none of those in the cabin could have escaped, so jammed and wedged in were they, one on top of the other, while the floor of the cabin was nearly straight up and down.

But suddenly the Curlew began to tremble from stem to stern, and slowly righted herself, when the drenched, trembling, frightened party hurried on deck and there found that a smart breeze had sprung up from the southeast, and that all the yachts in sight were bowling along with everything drawing aloft and aloft, except The Tramp, which lay some distance astern, waiting to pick up a boat she had lowered.

"What was it, sailing-master?" asked Roberts, after he had somewhat recovered from his fright and had wrung out his coat.

"A reg'lar 'knock down,' sir, from a sudden squall that come from I don't know where, for none o' the other boats war touched, an' we lay right in the middle of a bunch of them."

"But The Tramp; did she not feel it?"

"Not a mose! sir, but when she see us agoin', she lowered a boat, quick like, and sent it to us in case we went over, and gone over we would if the yawl there on the davits hadn't held us; jest look at them davits!"

And, in fact, they were a sight to behold, for the lee boat had been so jammed into the water, that the iron davits were bent nearly straight, showing that a tremendous pressure had been exerted on them.

"The squall came so sudden, seemin' to drop right down from the clouds, thet I had sca'cely time to let go my sheets, and even then she went over an' over until she spilled the wind out of her topsails; it was a narrow squeak, and no mistake, Mr. Roberts."

"Well, I'm glad that it was no worse; nothing carried away is there?"

"Everything as right as a twist, sir."

"Good enough; but, gentlemen, had we not better heave to and wait for The Tramp, since she was delayed by lowering a boat for our benefit? it would seem but right."

"If you'll look at that craft you will see that there ain't much use waitin' for her, Mr. Roberts," said the sailing-master, shaking his head; "she's a-comin' up to us like a steamer overhaulin' a coastin' schooner. Jerusalem, how she does fly!"

And fly she did, and soon came alongside, when Herbert waved his hat and congratulated them on their escape, and then passed by them as though they were anchored, quickly overhauled the leading yachts, and left them far behind while she rapidly flew seaward, dashing the foam high over her bows as the waves began to rise, and soon disappeared in the distance, her white sails gleaming in the sun alone showing where she was.

"She's the Flyin' Dutchman, or I'm one myself," muttered the old sailing-master, while all on board the Curlew looked at each other in amazement as they realized the wonderful speed displayed by The Tramp.

CHAPTER XVII.

BEATRICE LEARNS SOMETHING.

AFTER the two girls had finished their cry, Renie, turning to Miss Reade, said:

"Miss Reade, or rather Linda—for I may call you Linda, may I not?"

"Oh, if you will, I should be so glad."

"Well, then, Linda, dear, do you know that I believe we are going to be excellent friends, and you must never leave me, even after I am married, for I want you to stay with me, always—unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless the Fairy Prince comes along."

"The Fairy Prince!"

"Yes."

"What Fairy Prince?"

"Did you never read the 'Sleeping Beauty'?"

"Oh, often, but— Oh, yes, I do!" and

she blushed red as fire and hid her face in her hands.

"Then there is a Fairy Prince already!"

"Ye—yes," stammered the confused girl.

"And does he consent to your going out to service this way?"

"He does not know."

"Not a lover's quarrel, I hope?"

"Nothing of the sort, only— I cannot tell you, please do not ask."

"I ask nothing, only I hope that if you have any sorrows you will come to me for comfort and sympathy; you know that a secret sorrow confided to a friend is half subdued."

"I will tell you, and now— But, no, I cannot, the secret is not my own and the sorrow does not exist."

"Well, I will not be curious, so let us change the subject. Will you drive with us?"

"Oh, Miss Rivers, you are too kind, I do not think that I had better go. What would Mr. Temple say when he discovers that your honored guest is only your seamstress?"

"It makes no difference what he says or thinks," replied the little beauty, with a willful toss of her head, "he must treat my friends courteously or be dropped from the list of my acquaintance."

"I would not cause trouble for anything."

"Do not fear, I will see that you do not suffer anything."

"But I should at once commence my duties. When do you return home?"

"After dinner, this evening, and then I will take you with me."

"Where is your luggage?"

"At the Express Office, to be kept until I send for it."

"And what office do you mean?"

"At Dodd's, on Broadway near Twenty-third street; do you not know it?"

"Oh, yes, I will send one of the servants down there and tell them to deliver the trunk in Brooklyn to-morrow, and we can have it brought out to 'Westview' then."

"You are very good."

"Oh, no, I am not; but I hear the gentlemen coming in. If you will excuse me I will run up-stairs and put on my things and then hurry down."

"You can entertain the two Messrs. Temple while I am absent."

And before Linda could interpose a word in objection to this plan the impetuous young girl had flown out into the hall, whence she soon appeared, leading Mervyn and his father by the arm.

"There, gentlemen, Linda will entertain you for a few moments, and I am sure will do it much better than I could."

"You flatter me, Miss Rivers."

"She is always flattering some one," said Mr. Temple, as he pinched one of the girl's flush cheeks, "that is the way she manages to rule us all with a rod of iron."

"You are much the better for being ruled," cried Renie, as she danced out of the room, kissing her hand to the trio as she disappeared.

"A charming young lady, is she not Miss Reade," said Vane Temple, seating himself opposite Linda.

"Charming indeed, and so full of life and spirit; she is almost like a child."

"She is a child, not being much over seventeen, and that is one cause of my son's melancholy, for she vows that she will not marry until she is twenty, while he declares that he can never consent to put off the wedding for three long, weary years."

"It does seem like an eternity," groaned the son, with so lugubrious a countenance that Linda could scarce refrain from laughing, but succeeded with some difficulty, in maintaining her composure.

"But years pass swiftly when one is young," sighed Vane Temple as if he bitterly regretted the days of his youth.

"You have a very pleasant home here, Mr. Temple," remarked Linda, as if anxious to turn the conversation into another channel; "you have lived here for some time?"

"For nearly two years; we moved in here immediately after Mr. Waters's death. You have, of course, heard of that mysterious occurrence?"

"Oh, father, do not bring up that tragedy; you will only horrify, Miss Reade."

"Oh, my nerves are very strong, I as-

sure you; what do you refer to, Mr. Temple?"

"About two years ago—"

"If you are going to tell stories of that nature I will go into the parlor," interrupted Mervyn, rising as he spoke.

"Only an excuse to see Renie alone," laughed his father; "but, we'll forgive you, my boy."

And when the younger man had left the room he continued:

"It was in this house that Mr. Waters committed suicide, two years ago."

"Yes, I recall the circumstance."

"The room that he occupied was just over this one, and is now in exactly the same condition as when he left it."

"Were there not some rumors, at the time, that he had been killed or rather murdered by some one who was interested in his death?"

"Mere idle talk," returned the other, his face blanching very slightly; "there could be no doubt that Mr. Waters committed suicide, as his accounts with his firm showed that he was so deeply involved by speculation that disgrace and financial ruin stared him in the face."

"You knew him?"

"Intimately; in fact we were partners, and if he had only had confidence in me, and told me of his troubles, all might have been arranged."

"He left no family, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, two of his children are now living in New York, a boy and a girl. The boy I have never seen, but Beatrice, the daughter, I met only a few days ago, and offered to assist her, but she insultingly declined, and is, I firmly believe, insane, and will be much better off in the asylum, where I propose to place her."

Beatrice never winced, but inwardly thanked her good fortune in thus leading Temple to disclose to her, a perfect stranger to him, his designs against her liberty.

Her blood-boiled, inwardly, but she preserved a calm demeanor, and was about to reply indifferently, when they were interrupted by the entrance of Miss Rivers and Mervyn Temple, the latter of whom cried:

"Well, Miss Reade, I hope that my father has not chilled your blood and tired you with his ghastly romancing!"

And she only replied, quietly:

"On the contrary, I have been more interested than you can imagine in what I have learned."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ABDUCTION.

STARTLED by the fall of her mistress, the maid, Felice, came hurrying up-stairs into the room, where she found Gia' lying stretched on the floor, entirely unconscious.

It was some time before the stricken girl could be brought to consciousness and to the realization of what had happened.

"What is it, Felice?" she cried wildly, as she looked up; "what has happened?"

"Indeed, madam, that is a question that I am unable to answer. I heard you fall, and hurried up-stairs only to find you lying on the floor in a dead faint. Has something frightened madam?"

"Nothing, nothing; I do not—" and then as her eye caught sight of the white bit of pasteboard, like a flash recollection returned to her, and she cried:

"Oh, yes, now I recall everything, everything!"

And, rising with difficulty, she threw herself into the chair that she had quitted a few moments before, and covering her eyes with her hands, burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

"Will not madam retire?" suggested the maid, after she had tried in vain to soothe and quiet her mistress.

"Retire! What repose can come to me? What rest can the body find, or hope for, when the mind is diseased? How can I expect that sleep will visit my couch when I have just learned that the man I have married is not what he professes to be, or that, at least, it looks very suspicious?"

"Look at this card: what would it be doing in that case if the glasses did not belong to the person whose name is on the pasteboard?"

"But, madam, Mr. Merton may have borrowed them, for he claims to have just

returned, and may not have unpacked his things."

"True! true! Felice, I had not thought of that, and your words comfort me more than I can say. Of course that is the explanation, and I am a foolish girl to be thus jealous of my Carlo."

"Then madam had better retire, and she will soon forget her troubles, which seem to have no foundation."

"I think I will do as you suggest, but you had better hang that coat up, and I will ask Carlo about the opera-glasses in the morning, for I am sure that he will be here then."

So Felice, taking the coat, walked to the side of the room where some hooks were fastened and hung the coat up by the strap inside the collar, but as she did so, the strap broke and the coat fell to the floor, so that she stooped to pick it up and try again.

But as she did so she saw that a small leather, gold-mounted card-case had dropped from one of the inside pockets, and, picking it up she handed it to Gia', saying:

"Maybe this may explain to whom the coat belongs and madam can return the glasses in the morning."

"You do not suppose that Carlo borrowed the coat as well as the glasses?"

"I do not know, madam, but that, it seems to me, is possible."

"Well, I do not believe it, but I will see—but no, I will not open this case. I have no right to suspect Mr. Merton and—but it fairly burns my fingers; there is nothing private about a card-case; why should I not examine it?"

"Why, indeed, madam!"

And opening the case Gia' uttered a cry of admiration, for, looking straight out from the case was a beautiful photograph of a lovely young girl, and underneath the picture was written:

"RENIE TO MERVYN."

With a voice as dull and harsh as if it proceeded from the throat of a different person, Gia', as she gazed as if fascinated into the blue eyes that so smilingly confronted her, asked:

"What was the name on that envelope you handed to the gentleman in the post-office?"

"Miss Renie something; I did not see the remainder of the address."

"Then there is no doubt about it; the man you saw that day was Carlo Merton; the man whom I have married, believing him to be Carlo Merton, is—Mervyn Temple!"

"But, madam—"

"Wait!" she cried, as cold and calm, as stern and inflexible as a judge pronouncing sentence:—

"Let me investigate this matter to the end, and then, Carlo Merton or Mervyn Temple, whichever you may be—*be careful!*"

The case contained nothing but a dozen or more cards, all engraved with Temple's name, and a small scrap of paper which was tightly folded and seemed to have been thrust into the case and there forgotten, and which, on being unfolded, showed that it had at one time been covered with writing in pencil, the marks now being almost entirely obliterated.

Gia' looked at it curiously, for a few moments, turning it in every direction under the light, and finally uttering a cry of surprise, handed it to Felice, saying:

"There is no longer any doubt. This is a note that I slipped into Carlo's hand, nearly two years ago, as he was coming out of the theater."

"I am convinced that I am a deceived woman, and that Carlo Merton is not what he pretends to be."

"But, madam, maybe that is his *real* name, and that Mervyn Temple is only adopted by him at various times and for reasons with which you are not acquainted."

"That may all be true, yet if he is sailing under false colors, here or elsewhere, it is the same thing, and there is some hidden motive concealed beneath this disguise, which I will undertake to discover."

"Who knows that he is not plotting against the peace and happiness of this fair girl!" tapping the photograph gently as she spoke.

"But, if I am in time I will see that he does not wrong her. To-morrow, Felice, he

will be here, or at least has promised to come within a few days, and to-morrow if he could."

"Then, madam, you had better take my advice and retire, for you will need all of your strength."

"I think I will; but, what can that ring mean at this time of the night? Felice, run down and open the door," cried Gia', as the door-bell clanged loudly.

And, looking out of the window, she saw a closed carriage standing in front, on the box of which the driver sat, motionless and erect.

Felice hurried down-stairs and opened the door, when, without any warning, two men sprung out of the darkness and seized her, dragged her to the carriage and thrust her in, all the while stifling her cries. All entering, the vehicle was rapidly driven away, while Gia' sat, terrified, and staring in amazement into the darkness!

She was alone in the house, for Felice was the only servant who remained over night in the dwelling, the cook coming in the morning and leaving in the evening.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SUCCESSFUL PLOT.

GIA's first impulse was to call for help; her next to rush to the street and follow the disappearing vehicle on foot; but, before she had half-crossed the room the door, which had been closed by Felice, opened, and Carlo Merton stood before her!

Forgetting in an instant all of her doubts, fears and jealous suspicions, the girl rushed across the room and threw herself into his arms, crying:

"Oh! Carlo, Carlo, you are here at last!"

But he repelled her, gently but firmly, and leading her to a chair, forced her to sit down, and then, bending over her, soothed her and quieted her paroxysms, for she was sobbing violently, and rapidly growing hysterical.

He had left the door ajar, and had Gia' been herself, she would have noticed that two figures were standing outside, leaning toward the room, and listening intently.

"What is troubling you, little one?" asked Carlo Merton, as he bent over the weeping girl and smoothed her black tresses from her colorless brow.

"I have been so worried, so fearfully frightened, Carlo," sobbed the girl, in reply.

"And what has frightened you?"

"I thought that you were deceiving me, and that you were not Carlo Merton at all, but some one else."

"And who did you think I was?"

"Mervyn Temple."

"And why?"

"Because I found some things in your overcoat with that name on them."

"My overcoat?"

"Yes, you left it in the cab and the driver brought it back here, not knowing where to find you."

"Curse his honesty!" growled the other, biting his lip.

"And I thought that you had married me under a false name, and that—"

"Thought that I had married you?"

"Yes."

"My poor child, what hallucination is this? You know that I never saw you before you accosted me this evening as I was leaving the theater."

"Never saw me?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"You are not my husband, Carlo Merton?"

"I am not."

"Then"—and the girl sprung to her feet and gazed wildly around—"then, who, in Heaven's name, are you?"

"My name is Mervyn Temple."

"Yes, I see," she returned, sarcastically, and with cutting coldness, "Mervyn Temple, *alias* Carlo Merton."

"Poor child, what delusion are you laboring under? Who 'Carlo Merton' may be I have not the slightest idea, and I fear that some trouble has turned your brain; in fact, I feared so when I brought you home and left you here."

"Do you mean to affirm that you are *not* the man to whom I was married nearly two years ago—that you are *not* the man who, finding that he could not win me in any other way, led me to the altar and there gave me his name?"

"I most assuredly do mean that. As I said before, I never, to my knowledge, laid eyes on you before to-night."

"Oh, heavens!" cried the girl, "my brain will burst! What farce is this that you are playing, and what end would you achieve?"

"But I know! I understand! I have come between you and this fair young girl who gave you this photograph and this ring, and before you can marry her you are compelled to dispose of me!"

"But, you will find that I will not tamely submit, and if we are to be separated, death, and death alone, can cut the bonds!"

"You little know what Italian blood will do when driven to it; but I warn you, Carlo Merton, do not persist in this farce, or, as the Madonna is my saint, I will kill you where you stand."

She was a magnificent incarnation of insulted womanhood as she stood there with blazing eyes, streaming hair parted lips and bosom heaving with emotion, her small hands clinched until the blue veins stood out like whipcords, and the man who confronted her could scarce suppress a cry of admiration at her beauty; but his callousness again asserted itself and he said, sneeringly:

"Farce, you call it, do you? And you propose to turn it into a tragedy!"

And, continuing, sternly, he said:

"Now, young woman, I am getting tired of this exhibition, and now warn you. I want this thing stopped, right here! I want no more trouble from you. I desire that you shall cease your persecutions, and that you shall hereafter discontinue your foolish and insane claims upon me."

"If you have a husband who resembles me, for goodness sake find him and rule him as you will, but do not bother *me!*"

"I do not know who you are or what your object may be in thus persecuting me, but I warn you that if you do not stop, I will appeal to the law to prevent your annoying me."

She listened with dilating eyes and frowning brows to what he was saying until he had finished, and then, with a hoarse cry, like that of a wounded lioness, she turned, seized an Italian stiletto that hung in its scabbard on the wall, and leaped on him like a madwoman, her arm upraised to strike.

But the blow did not descend.

Springing through the half-opened door, two men threw themselves on her, wrested the weapon from her grasp, quickly overpowered her and, standing on either side of her, held her by the wrists, while her tormentor, turning to one of the men, said quietly:

"You see, doctor, that she is violently insane!"

"There can be no doubt of it, Mr. Temple," returned the man addressed; "these morbid fancies, when long indulged in and, if I may use the expression, hugged too closely, very often result in producing temporary, and sometimes permanent mental aberration."

"This last paroxysm proves that the malady is deep-seated, and liable at any moment to burst out in homicidal tendencies."

"And you think?"

"I think—indeed, am convinced—that the patient is dangerous, and should be put under restraint."

"And you will take charge of the case? I will see that the poor girl—for really I pity her—wants for nothing, financially speaking, and trust that you may soon effect a cure and return her to her family, if she has one, completely restored and in her right mind."

"Thank you, Mr. Temple; and now, my child, will you come with us?"

Gia' seemed utterly stunned by the turn that affairs had taken, and uttered never a word and offered no resistance, so that she was easily led away, out of the house, by the two men, and placed in a closed carriage that was stationed around the corner.

"To the asylum!" directed the physician in charge, and the hack rattled off, leaving Mr. Temple standing on the pavement.

And as it disappeared, he turned and walked back to the house, which he entered and closed, and then going up-stairs, took his coat, card-case and opera-glasses, extinguished the light and, leaving the house, locked the door and placed the key in his pocket.

Then lighting a cigar, he walked rapidly down the street muttering:

"That job is finished, and now nothing stands between Renie and me."

CHAPTER XX.

A DISCOVERY.

THE drive proved a very pleasant one, and was much enjoyed by all, particularly by Beatrice, for the long strain consequent upon the conversation regarding her father had fatigued and depressed her.

When they returned to the house about half-past five o'clock, Renie said to her new-found friend, for whom she seemed to have acquired a sudden liking:

"We will now retire for a time and leave these gentlemen to their own devices, as we will not dine until seven o'clock, so come up-stairs and I will show you your room where you can lie down and rest for a time, undisturbed, for you look pale and tired."

So, going up-stairs, Linda following, Miss Rivers ushered her into a room that seemed to adjoin the one over the library, and there left her, saying as she did so:

"I will knock on the door about half-past six, so that you will have time to prepare for dinner."

"I hope that you are not nervous, for that door leads into a closet that opens into the room in which Mr. Waters was found dead; but as there is a bolt on it I do not think any ghost will visit you, particularly as there is no keyhole through which it could pass."

"Oh, I am not at all superstitious, and do not fear any spiritual visitors."

"So much the better, and now I will leave you for a time."

Beatrice waited, after she had left the room, for some time, fearing that she might return, and then, when all became quiet, she locked the door, and then going to the closet, unbolted it, and without faltering went boldly through into the other room.

It had evidently not been disturbed since the day of the funeral, and everything was heavy with dust, while the closed shutters shut out nearly every ray of light, so that the chamber was shrouded in a mysterious gloom that heightened her mournful thoughts.

There, in that bed, which yet bore the impress of his body, had been found the corpse of her father, and into this room, in the stillness of that night two years ago, the Angel of Death had stalked and laid its finger on the recumbent man's brow.

For some time she stood on the threshold, and then swiftly removing her shoes, she closed the closet door after her and walked quietly across the carpet to the bedside, where she sunk on her knees and remained for some time quietly praying.

The confused murmur of voices, deadened by distance, came from below, showing that the two Temples were yet in the library and conversing together, and while that noise continued Beatrice felt assured that she ran no risk of being discovered.

At length she arose, silently, and began to examine the room on all sides, for if it were true that her father had been murdered, as Ferrett suspected, there must be some way by which the assassin had entered, and this entrance she was determined to discover if it existed.

But search as she would, in every nook and corner of the apartment, she could find nothing, and she became almost discouraged, for she knew not when she would have another opportunity to visit the room, and the minutes were flying by rapidly.

She was about to give it up, when the thought struck her that something might be concealed behind the head of the bed, the wall at that point being concealed by the heavy curtains that draped the bed at that place.

But the cumbersome piece of furniture had been pushed close up to the wall, and she could not even feel between the head-board and the wall without moving the bed, something that she dared not do, even were she able, for fear of attracting the attention of those below.

But she noticed that the bedposts, massively constructed as they were, projected some distance beyond the head-board, and saw that if she crept under the bed, she could then feel up and discover if there were any opening there; so, without hesitation, she

dropped on the floor, and after some little effort, wormed her way underneath the bed, extended her hand and felt up under the head-board, when she with difficulty repressed a cry of surprise.

For cut into the wall was a small niche, about three feet wide and a couple of feet deep, which had evidently been constructed to contain a statue, and was now completely hidden by the head of the bed.

Here was a place in which an assassin could conceal himself, but how could he have entered?

Crawling into the niche, and standing upright in it without difficulty, Beatrice tapped gently on the wall, and found to her surprise that it sounded hollow, and that by exerting a slight pressure, she could bend the back of the niche outward, it seeming to be made of canvas.

Again she tapped, and then her heart seemed to stop beating as a voice, that sounded almost in her ear, said:

"What is that noise, Mervyn? Did you not hear something that sounded as if proceeding from this picture?"

"What is the matter? You are ashen pale and look as if you had seen a ghost."

"It is nothing, father, a slight dizziness, but you must be mistaken, I heard nothing."

"I am positive that I am not mistaken; go to the library, look in the side drawer of my desk, and bring me the key of this room."

And then Beatrice heard the sound of footsteps descending the stairs, a hand tried the knob of the door, and then all was still.

She had closed the closet door after her when she had entered, and carried her shoes in her hand, still holding them, unconsciously, and knew that there was no danger of her being discovered unless they looked under the bed and into the niche, the bottom of which was above the level of the lower edge of the head-board.

But if they should go into her room and find her absent!

But she did not think that they would attempt this, and yet she dared not move for fear that Mr. Temple, who stood outside, would hear the rustling of her dress if she moved.

So, standing perfectly still, and breathing as gently as her rapidly-beating heart would permit, she waited as the steps again ascended the stairs, the key was inserted and turned, while the lock grated harshly and the door swung open.

And then she heard the voice of Mervyn Temple, who still stood in the hall, saying to his father, who had entered the room:

"You see, sir, there is no one here, and your imagination alone is responsible for what you thought that you heard."

CHAPTER XXI.

A WARNING.

THE Curlew was still some distance from the light-ship—four or five miles at least—when they met The Tramp, flying homeward, having rounded the stake-boat, with all sail set and seeming one cloud of canvas, while she parted the waves in front of her into two white masses of rolling foam, dashing the spray high up to her cross-trees, and drenching the deck with the salt waters.

"The jig is up, Temple," said one of Mr. Roberts's guests, "and you might as well hail the yacht—if you can call that thing a yacht—and pay up, for you've most certainly lost."

"I guess that is about so, Mervyn," added Roberts; "of course you can wait until she crosses the finishing line, for some accident may happen to her between now and then."

"Of course I'll wait; we've got to sail the race out, I suppose, and we will win the regatta, in any event, for there is nothing near us."

"Yes, that seems probable, and although we are far ahead we cannot afford to lose any time by heaving to and hailing The Tramp."

"So hold your course, sailing-master, and we will finish the race, anyhow."

The Tramp rapidly drew near them, and as she flashed by close under the lee-quarter of the Curlew, her spinnakers and balloon sails were stripped off of her like magic, the helm was put hard down, and as a gun was fired from her bows she came gracefully about, and catching the wind, fell off rap-

idly on the starboard tack, swiftly overhauling the other schooner and sailing alongside of her.

Her sails were kept fluttering and shaking, and at times, when she forged ahead, she was thrown up into the wind and sailed a waiting race, much to the disgust of those on board the Curlew, who realized how the others were playing with them as a cat with a mouse.

And in due course of time they reached and rounded the light-ship, when all of the sail that the Curlew could spread was set; yet, even with spinnakers and balloon topsails and jib, she could not shake off her adversary, which clung to her so persistently, although she had nothing but working-sails set.

Side by side they sailed on, neither one nor the other gaining or losing an inch, until they entered the narrows, when Herbert set his balloon and flying jib, and under this increased sail The Tramp fairly bounded away, like an impatient charger, released from the fretting bit, leaving the Curlew far behind, and crossing the line, fired her gun, came about and luffed up into the wind, awaiting the arrival of her rival, which occurred ten minutes after.

Of all the squadron "The Tramp" was the first one in, the "Curlew" being the second, and as the latter came shooting past, Roberts, running close alongside, tossed a package on the deck of "The Tramp," at Herbert's feet, crying:

"Well and honorably won; here is your stake and Mr. Temple's thousand!"

"Thank you, sir," shouted the boy in return, while at the same moment he gave orders to fall off and was soon plowing his way up the harbor toward the Battery and soon disappeared into the East River where his boat was hidden from the view of those watching at Bay Ridge.

"That boat is a perfect terror, isn't she, Mervyn?" asked Roberts, when they were seated in the gig and were being rowed ashore.

"I never saw anything equal to her in my life," replied the gentleman addressed, "and did not believe the yacht floated that could show the 'Curlew' as clean a pair of heels as that craft did."

"Where she was built and who built her I would give much to know."

And leaping lightly out on the landing-stage he walked up the hill to where a large party of ladies and gentlemen was assembled, to many of whom he bowed and then, seeing Miss Rivers sitting at one side, he quickly went to her, bowing as he did so to Miss Reade who was also seated near by.

"Well, Renie, we have won," he cried, cheerily, trying to avoid all mention of the other boat.

"Have you?" answered the girl. "I thought that the first boat in soon."

"So she does."

"And you were first in?"

"Most assuredly."

"And how about that boat?" pointing as she spoke to "The Tramp," which was still in sight.

"Oh, she doesn't belong to the club, so she can not claim the prize."

"But she beat you, did she not?"

"Well, I should think so," he answered, determining to put the best face on matters that he could.

"Did she sail the full course?"

"Yes; and more."

"And where does she come from?"

"That I cannot say; she is a stranger in these waters and handled by as fine a working set of lads as I ever saw."

"I thought that her crew looked young, and as I caught sight of the boy at the wheel I noticed that he was probably not yet twenty."

"Is it possible that—" and then she stopped as if afraid of being overheard, and then glancing rapidly around she leaned forward and whispered:

"Could that possibly have been the 'Gleam'?"

"The 'Gleam'! What in the world put such an idea as that in your head?"

"The 'Gleam'! Why, Renie, you saw the 'Gleam', and I am surprised that you could compare her beautiful lines to that ungainly craft."

"Of course it was a foolish thought, and

I had no ground for my suspicions but the fact of her crew being so young."

"Well, you might as well dismiss those suspicions, as they certainly are without any foundation whatever."

"What did you think of the finish, Miss Reade?" as he turned to Linda.

"It was a lovely sight, sir, and one that I enjoyed very much."

"You must go out with us on 'Lady's Day,' when I hope to have my own yacht here."

"Thank you, sir, I should be delighted, if Miss Rivers is going, and will allow me to accompany her."

"Miss Rivers most certainly is going," returned that petulant little beauty, "but she does not propose to 'allow' you to go, she proposes to beg you to."

"Then I surely will go."

At that moment Temple, who was seated in a chair between the two ladies, with his hand hanging carelessly beside him, felt something thrust into his fingers, and grasping it mechanically, raised his hand and saw that he held a scrap of paper, when he immediately turned to see who had handed it to him.

But he could discover no one in his immediate neighborhood whom he could suspect, so, opening the scrap, and excusing himself for a moment, he stepped to one side and read these words:

"As you lost the yacht race to-day, so will you henceforth lose all you undertake."

"Be warned in time; repent before it is too late, and give justice where it is due."

"The Gleam will ride at her anchorage within forty-eight hours, unharmed."

"Thanks for her use."

"Remember! Repent!"

"Carlo Merton may be dead, but his deeds still live."

"Not 'adieu,' but, 'au revoir.'"

And staggering back against a tree, Mervyn Temple shook as with the ague, while tremendous drops of perspiration chased each other down his brow.

"What can this mean?" he muttered.

"Who can know anything of Carlo Merton?"

"Bah! Some one of the boys who knows of my intrigue with Gia', is trying to amuse himself at my expense. I'll pay no attention to the matter."

And endeavoring to quiet his fears with this fictitious excuse, he rejoined the ladies, but continued to be nervous and preoccupied all the evening, until the party broke up.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRIVATE ASYLUM.

THE carriage containing Gia', the physician and his assistant rolled rapidly along, the girl sitting silent, and as if stunned by the blow, while the doctor watched her closely.

Nothing could be seen through the windows, which were of ground glass, and Gia' had no idea in what direction she was being taken, and was in fact so overwhelmed by the turn of affairs, that she did not seem at all interested in what was passing.

And, indeed, it was a cruel shock to see the idol that she had worshiped, adored, hurled from its pedestal and dashed to the ground, and instead of being worthy of her adoration, proven to be only a fit object of her scorn and contempt.

She could at first scarcely realize that Carlo Merton, the man she had loved with all the devotion of her Southern nature, with all the intensity and passion of her tropical blood, had proven himself to be made of the vilest clay, and unworthy of her slightest thought.

She could realize dimly that it was for some unknown reason that she was thus being carried off to a living tomb, and suspected that it was done that she might not interfere with his plans regarding that fair young girl whose photograph he had seen, and whose name, written on the card she knew to be "Renie."

He had spoken to her of his embarrassed circumstances, and it was more than probable that her rival was wealthy, and that he hoped to improve his condition by a wealthy match with this new love—if love her he did.

And she determined to submit quietly to everything and thus lull suspicion, hoping that she might soon be able to escape from

the asylum, as she had heard it called, and then appear in time to thwart her husband's design and save the girl he wished to marry from disgrace and ruin.

So, turning to the physician, she asked:

"Is it far from here to our destination?"

"An hour's drive, at least."

"And where are we going?"

"To a private hospital, where I hope that by kind treatment and skillful care you may soon be completely restored to health."

"A private hospital?"

"Yes, or rather a remedial institute devoted to the treatment of brain disorders."

"In other words an insane asylum."

"A private asylum."

"Are they not the same thing?"

"Not by any means; with me you will have your own private rooms and special attendant."

"You can have your meals whenever you wish, and will be entirely free from all restraint, except that you will not be allowed to leave the grounds, unless it is with me or with one of my assistants."

"And have you many patients, doctor?"

"Yes, I may say that we are crowded, for through my humble efforts most of my patients are doing remarkably well, and the fame of the asylum is spreading rapidly."

"And how long has it been in existence?"

"The asylum?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was opened by me nearly four years ago."

"And I suppose that during that time you have discharged a number of the inmates—cured?"

"N-n-o-o-o," replied the "doctor," hesitatingly, "not exactly that; in fact no one has been discharged since we first opened, but I am sanguine that in the course of a few months or a year, we will be able to return one, at least, of our patients to his friends, completely restored."

This was sufficient for Gia', for through the physician's halting answers she realized all: that the "Retreat," as he would undoubtedly call it, was nothing more or less than a private prison in which those persons who were obnoxious to their friends could be confined, under the guise of insanity, as long as their keeper was paid a fair compensation for his care.

And she realized that the comedy that had been played in her apartment had for its object the result that had been obtained: to throw her into a passion, to cause her to claim Merton or Temple for her husband and thus give the physician opportunity to pronounce her mind affected and to carry her off to hold her prisoner during Temple's orders.

For a moment she grew sick at heart as she thought of the terrors of the mad-house in which she was shortly to be incarcerated, yet she quickly nerved herself for the coming shock, for she comprehended that if she thus easily became frightened at the anticipation, that the realization would drive her mad indeed.

She knew that persons perfectly sane who were thus confined in lunatic asylums, very often were driven crazy by their surroundings, and, indeed, was not sure that various vile means, such as the administration of insidious drugs, were not resorted to in order to destroy the mind and affect the brain of the patient.

But while she was occupied with these thoughts, the horses attached to the vehicle trotted rapidly on, and, not long after, stopped suddenly, drawing up at the side of the road, as Gia' could tell by the grating of the wheels against the curb, when a bell sounded in the distance, the creaking of iron gates was heard as they swung open, the carriage moved on again, and then stopped, the door was opened, and her companion stepping out, extended his hand to Gia' to assist her to alight, saying:

"Here we are at last, Miss Gia'; allow me to escort you to the parlor."

The girl stepped out and cast one hurried look around before she was gently pushed into the house, and saw that the yard was fronted by a high stone wall, surmounted by sharp spikes, that rendered it unscalable.

And then looking up at the building, she saw a long expanse of white brick three stories high, scarred at regular intervals by iron-barred windows that frowned down

grimly, while from behind them came a chorus of shrieks and groans and yells and cries of discordant laughter that chilled her blood, while to add to the horror, she distinctly heard the sound of heavy blows, as if some poor prisoner were being savagely beaten. And then she was forced inside the massive door, over which she thought should be written the words of her poet-countryman, Dante:

"Leave all hope behind, ye who enter here."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SWINGING PICTURE.

"I AM sure that my imagination was not alone responsible for what I thought I heard," returned Mr. Temple in response to his son's remark, as he looked carefully about the room, going so far as to open the closet door and examine that place, and stooping low so that he could see under the bed.

"It is very strange, though, and I can not understand what caused the noise; close the door, Mervyn, and we will go over the room carefully, beginning with the bed."

"The noise I heard may have been caused by rats, and if that is so I must have the matter looked after."

Beatrice's heart almost stopped beating, for she knew that if she were discovered, it would ruin her plans for the future, expose her instantly to the suspicions of the Temples, and cause her immediate dismissal from Miss Rivers's service.

But she was fairly trapped and could not move, so waited for whatever might happen as patiently as she could.

Much to her relief Mervyn Temple suddenly spoke, saying:

"There is no use trying to move that bed, father, for it is fastened to the floor, as you can see by these brass plates that are screwed down, and if you wish to search under and behind it you will have to get a carpenter here."

"I see, you are right, Mervyn, and as it is more than probable that the rats or mice or whatever it was that caused that noise are inside the walls I will not worry about it any more."

"Come, let us lock the door and go to our rooms, for dinner will soon be ready."

"We have some time yet, father, and I have something to say to you."

"Well, what is it—some more of your scrapes, I'll warrant."

"You are right, but this is a very serious one."

"What on earth have you been doing now?"

"Nothing, very lately, but I sowed a couple of years ago, or less, and I am afraid that I will soon have to reap."

"Well, out with it," said the father seating himself on the bed, and leaning against the head-board so close to where Beatrice was standing that she could hear him breathe.

"You remember that little flower-girl that you once were in the habit of teasing me about?"

"The little girl of the Elite lobby?"

"Yes."

"Well, what about her?"

"Nothing particular, only I married her about sixteen months ago."

"You married her?"

"Precisely."

"Is this a joke, or are you in earnest?"

"In dead earnest."

"You young fool!"

"Thank you, father, I believe I am a fool, or rather was, so will not object to the appellation."

"And where is Mrs. Temple now?"

"There is no Mrs. Temple that I know of."

"But—"

"But there is a Mrs. Merton, for I married Gia' under the name of Carlo Merton; and she knows me by no other."

"That at least was sensible."

"But where is Mrs. Merton, or Giacinta?"

"Still living, I suppose, in the house I gave her."

"And have you seen her since you returned?"

"No, sir."

"What do you know of her then?"

"My agent—you know him—Dr. Girardi, has kept me informed of her movements,

and he tells me that she haunts the lobby of the Elite Theater, where she knows that we have a box, every evening, dressed as a flower girl, apparently looking for me."

"Why doesn't the young idiot go inside?"

"I don't know; romantic, I suppose."

"Are you going to hunt her up?"

"I will see her this evening."

"And once more become the devoted husband, I suppose," sneered his father.

"Wrong for once, my diplomatic ancestor; I shall see her for the purpose of putting into execution a little plot that I have concocted."

"And may I learn what it is?"

"This much will inform you sufficiently: that I will meet her at the theater, that I will drive her home, that I will leave her there; that I will pay the cabman to go back to her house with my coat and tell her that I forgot it in the cab; that she will search the pockets; that she will find enough in them to arouse her jealousy; that I will appear at the proper moment, and deny being her husband; that the doctor will take charge of her; and—exit Gia', enter Renie."

"Bravo! my son, bravo! the plot is worthy of Satan, your master."

"But, really, for a moment you frightened me, for I did not know how you were going to manage to arrange matters, and Renie, you know—"

"Yes, I know," and Mervyn Temple laughed cruelly; "I know that Renie Rivers's fortune will be mine, and that my year's traveling in Europe with her will not have been undertaken in vain."

"Yes, and with her fortune added to what we already have, we can extend our transactions until we can become the veritable kings of Wall street!"

"Do not talk so loud, father, for Heaven's sake!" whispered Mervyn Temple, as in his exultation the elder gentleman raised his voice as he stood erect, quivering with excitement.

"I forgot myself for a moment; but now let us go, and we have no time to spare to get ready for dinner."

"When do you propose to explode your mine against Mrs. Merton, or rather Miss Gia' Gisela?"

"This evening."

"The sooner the better; I will pretend that I have something for you to do, so that Renie cannot interfere."

"Come on."

And the worthy father and the worthy son left the room, locking the door behind them, while Beatrice, horrified at what she had heard, trembling with excitement, and realizing how utterly powerless she was to prevent this crime, under the circumstances, slipped from her hiding-place, hurried to her room, and had just succeeded in removing some of the dust from her hands and dress when Renie knocked on the door and asked if she might come in.

"Certainly," cried Beatrice, "in a moment," and as she slipped on her shoes she opened the door and admitted the young girl.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Linda?" she cried, as she danced in, "you are so pale and haggard that I believe you are ill."

But as Beatrice realized, as she looked into the pure blue eyes of the young beauty, the entire hideousness of the plot against her, she threw her arms about her neck and cried:

"Forgive me, forgive me, dear, but promise me that if ever pain or sorrow come to you, that you will confide in me!"

"Of course I will, Linda, dear, and thank you now for your kind thoughtfulness, although I have nothing to fear with Mervyn and his father by my side."

And then they left the room, Beatrice casting one loving look back at the apartment that had been hers during her father's life, and went out into the hall.

But as they neared the head of the stairs Beatrice noticed, hanging against the wall, a full length portrait of her father, which had always hung there, and suspected that it formed the back of the niche in which she had concealed herself, and so, when they had gone down-stairs where the gentlemen were standing waiting for the summons for dinner, she excused herself and ran back to her room, while the others entered the parlor.

Coming to the picture, and making sure that no one was in sight, she tried to move the frame, but it was securely fastened, and would not stir; so rapidly feeling the edge of the frame, she discovered a sort of catch at the bottom, and pressing hard against it, it gave way, and the picture, swinging out by hinges at the top, disclosed behind it the niche and head-board of the bedstead. So quickly replacing the frame and snapping the catch she hurried down-stairs and rejoined the others.

If it were true that her father had been murdered, it was certain that she had discovered the opening through which the assassin had entered.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LITTLE "DISCIPLINE"

THE bright moonlight that flooded everything permitted Gia' to obtain an excellent idea of her surroundings, during the fleeting glance that she was able to cast around before being forced to enter the front door.

Here she was confronted by a stern-looking woman of vinegary aspect, who had seen probably fifty years, and who was tall and raw-boned and evidently possessed of unusual strength.

"Mrs. Strake," said Doctor Girardi, "I have brought you a new patient, Miss Gia' Giacinta, who will probably be under your care for some time, although I hope not for very long."

"You will please see that she wants for nothing, and had better place her in Number 11, and as it is now very late I will retire and see to prescribing for her in the morning."

"So, good-night, Miss Gia', and pleasant dreams."

And then the girl, realizing how completely she was in their power, and frightened by the villainous look upon the face of the so-called physician, and by the scarce concealed sneer that accompanied his last words, broke down completely and burst into a torrent of tears, while she sobbed violently, crying:

"Oh, do not shut me up in any one of those horrible rooms! Let me rather pass the night here, where I can look out and see the free sky, and feel the free air that blows in my face."

"Do not, doctor," she shrieked, falling on her knees and clasping her hands piteously, "do not send me away with that woman, for I am afraid of her and know that she means to do me some injury!"

"Decidedly hysterical, you see, Mrs. Strake," said Girardi, paying not the slightest attention to the girl's appeal.

"You had better take her to Number Nine, and see if a little discipline will not be beneficial to her," and opening a side door he disappeared, leaving Gia' alone in the hall with the woman whom the doctor addressed as Mrs. Strake, when, overcome by a dread of something, she knew not what, the girl turned and fled into the yard across the lawn to the iron gates, that were now firmly closed, and beat and tore at the cold bars as though she would wrench them from their sockets.

But it was useless, and no one seemed to pay any attention to her cries except the virago, who rapidly and silently followed her, seized her slender wrist with cruel force, and half-led, half-dragged her back into the house, up the stairs that conducted them to the second story, unlocked an iron door which she opened, and then, entering a long stone corridor, slammed the door after her with a hollow clang.

The passage resembled a corridor of a penitentiary, for it was long, narrow and gloomy, a solitary gas jet faintly lighting it, while on either side were ten or a dozen grated doors, that opened into the cells on right and on left.

And from many of these cells came the noises that had attracted Gia's attention when she had first arrived, although the sound of blows had ceased and there came to her ears in its place, a low moaning and groaning, as if from some one suffering the most acute mental anguish and physical pain.

Yells and cries and hollow laughter echoed through the narrow corridor, and fairly chilled the poor child's blood, but to all this her conductress paid no attention except by

a quickening pace, until she came to a low iron door, bearing the number nine, and opening this she thrust Gia' in, so rudely and with such force that the girl fell headlong to the floor, and for a moment was unable to rise.

And before she could regain her feet, straps were passed about her arms, and in a marvelously short space of time she was fastened in a sitting position with her back to the wall, when Mrs. Strake left her and closed the door behind her, leaving Gia' in almost total darkness.

She now began to realize the fact that she was confined in one of those private dens of iniquity established, professedly, for the cure of mental disorders, but in which troublesome persons could be confined by their relatives, and so long as payments were prompt, never heard of again.

And when persons who were perfectly sane were thus incarcerated, for fear that a commission of inquiry might be instituted, the proprietors of these prisons used every effort to destroy the mind of the inmate, and by surrounding him or her with horrible sights and sounds, and by the infliction of cruel and harsh treatment, endeavored to de-throne reason.

Deserted, apparently, by God and man, it was usually not long before the brain succumbed to these attacks, and the patient became a raving maniac, so that the commission could find no fault, but would readily agree that the patient was in too dangerous a condition to be allowed to go at large.

"Oh! what shall I do, what shall I do!" she moaned, as the full peril of her situation flashed upon her, and she felt that she was utterly powerless in the hands of these wretches, who would stop at nothing to win the gold that had undoubtedly been promised them.

Already she felt a creeping horror chilling her blood, and realized that if this strain were kept up much longer, that her mind would give way, and that she would become as were the other poor wretches about her, a body without a mind, a gibbering, raving, frantic maniac.

And as a fiercer cry than usual broke from the cell opposite, and the sound of the clanking of chains and rattling of iron wrenches in violent fury came to her, she cried aloud, her voice rising high through the wild chorus of the bedlamites roused to fury by the howl of anguish that came from the madman opposite.

"Pity! Pity! Pity!"

But as she raised her voice, a sound as if from a trap opening above fell on her aching ears, and instantly a flood of ice-cold water descended upon her unprotected head, shocking her as if she had been stricken to the floor by a mighty blow, and she fell groveling to the stone pavement, shrieking with anguish, while the icy torrent flowed on undiminished, choking and blinding her, and causing her to gasp for breath and to choke almost to suffocation, while the wild chorus rose higher and higher, until it almost seemed as if the very roof would be lifted from above her head.

And then the flood ceased as suddenly as it had commenced, and she was left there, drenched to the skin, while it seemed as if her very marrow would freeze, so chilled was she by the drenching torrent.

Her "discipline" had commenced and what the end would be, her jailers knew only too well!

CHAPTER XXV.

A MESSAGE.

It was several days after the yacht race, and nothing of any particular interest had transpired, while Beatrice had not proceeded one step in the direction of any discovery, when one morning, on visiting Renie at her home at Westview Cottage Mervyn Temple saw, lazily floating on the waters The Gleam, looking as trim and taut as though she had never masqueraded as The Tramp, so inviting Miss Rivers and Linda Reade to go with him, he drove them to the club-house, and there found his captain awaiting him.

"Well, Mr. Breen," said Temple, "you see the boat is back all right; have the men all reported this morning?"

"All but one, sir; and in his place I have engaged a young fellow who is, I think,

active and smart, and will make a good hand."

"Well, we will go aboard, then, and if everything is in order, I think I would like to take a sail."

"Here is a note, sir, that came for you not long ago," said the steward of the club-house, coming forward at that moment and handing an envelope to Temple.

"Thank you; you will excuse me, ladies?" and as they bowed, he broke the seal and read:

"MR. MERVYN TEMPLE,

Owner of Schooner Yacht "Gleam":—

"MY DEAR SIR:—Having seen your boat at Greenport, and liking her lines, very much, and having watched her performance up the Sound, was decidedly pleased with her, and write to ask if you care to dispose of her.

"I send this by a boy who has worked for me, and who, you will find, is a smart, active lad, if you are in need of a hand.

His name is Austin Tryon, and if you will kindly communicate your answer to him he will convey it to me.

"I will pay you any price, in reason, that you may ask for the 'Gleam.'

"And am, sir,

"Yours etc.,

"R. W. FARRINGTON."

When Temple had finished he turned to Captain Breen and asked him:

"Where is this lad Tryon?"

"At the landing-stage, sir, with the gig."

"Well, we will go aboard and I will see him after we reach the yacht."

"Ladies, are you ready?"

"Ready and waiting, Mervyn," replied Renie, petulantly.

"Then we will go aboard at once."

In a few moments they had reached the "Gleam," and, standing aft, Temple directed the captain to send Tryon to him, and in a moment a bright, active-looking lad, with reddish hair and clear complexion, came from forward, and taking off his cap stood waiting for whatever Temple might have to say to him.

The latter looked at him closely and then asked abruptly:

"Where did you get that scar?" for the boy's right cheek was disfigured by a long scar that seemed to have been made by a knife, and that extended from his eye down to his chin, being almost a perfect crescent in shape.

"In the Indian Ocean, sir, during a fight with Malay pirates."

"Ah, a slash from a creese, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Then you have seen service in those waters?"

"I have served on nearly all of the navigable waters of the globe, sir."

"Yet you are young?"

"Eighteen, sir, or rather nearly nineteen."

"You have seen considerable service for one so young."

"I have followed the water since I was nine years old, sir."

"Then you ought to know your business pretty well by this time."

"I think I do, sir."

"You were with this Mr.—Mr.—what is the gentleman's name from whom you brought this note?" tapping the envelope he held.

"Mr. Farrington, sir."

"Yes, that is it, 'Farrington;' you were with him some time?"

"A little over a year, sir."

"And what position did you hold?"

"I was captain of his yacht the 'Titania,' sir."

"Captain!"

"Yes, sir."

"Of the Titania? I don't know her."

"She is a sloop, I suppose?"

"No, sir, a schooner."

"A schooner! And you were captain?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you must be a good one."

"What will Mr. Farrington pay for the Gleam, do you know?"

"I know, yes, sir; but before making any offer I am instructed to see what she will do."

"What she will do?"

"Yes, sir."

"You mean that you want to sail her, say out to the Hook and back?"

"That will do."

"Then take charge of her."

"Captain," to Mr. Breen, "Tryon here is authorized to make me an offer for the

Gleam, and as I always sell when I can make anything, I wish him to try the yacht.

"Please consider yourself and the crew under his orders for to-day."

"The crew may, sir, but I must decline."

"Very well, as you wish; but if you decline to-day you may as well decline for all time."

"Very well, sir."

"Can I have a boat to set me ashore?"

"Certainly, and if any of the crew wish to leave, they can do so at the same time."

"We all wish to leave, sir," came the response from forward, where the men were assembled.

"Then you can go, and be hanged to you."

"Can you get another crew?"

"Yes, sir, by to-morrow," replied the lad.

"Then take charge of her, then; but in case she suits, what is Mr. Farrington prepared to offer for her?"

"Eighteen thousand dollars."

"Say twenty, and if she suits, take her."

"Then I will, and will let you know to-morrow night, or the day after."

"I will remain on board to-day."

"Then, ladies, we will go ashore. I regret that I am compelled to disappoint you, but you see how it is."

"Never mind, Mervyn, for it is not your fault," replied Renie, as she stepped to the side to enter the gig, "and we will go some other time."

And while she thus occupied Temple's attention, and the crew were busy preparing to leave, the boy, with a look at Beatrice, and with his finger on his lip, slipped a closely-folded piece of paper into her hand, and instantly turned away.

The girl, recognizing the name of Farrington, comprehended in a moment, and secreted the note so rapidly that her action was unnoticed, and then stepping into the boat, was quickly rowed ashore, when they were driven to the house.

And there Beatrice, reading the note, found written only three words:

"Come at once."

And realizing that it was from Ferrett, immediately went in search of Miss Rivers, that she might ask permission to go to the city.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEW PLANS.

BEATRICE found no difficulty in obtaining the required permission, and was offered the use of the Rivers carriage to take her as far as the ferry, at any rate, which offer she gladly accepted, and having prepared for the trip, was rapidly driven off.

In due course of time she reached the Fulton Ferry and there dismissed the carriage and took boat across the river, and was soon in the office of Ferrett & Co., as the sign still read, where she found half a dozen persons conversing with the old man she had seen at her first visit, and who, she knew, was Ferrett in disguise.

As she entered, he was saying:

"Mr. Ferrett cannot be seen to-day; in fact, he is now waiting for a visitor who comes on matters of the greatest importance, indeed, on matters of vital importance: yes, yes, that is it—vital importance!"

And then, catching sight of Beatrice, he rose hurriedly, crying:

"My dear Miss Reade, I am delighted to see you, and so will Mr. Ferrett be, I am sure, for he is expecting you anxiously."

"Will he be in soon?" inquired the girl, respecting his secret and not wishing to cause any suspicion as to his identity among the visitors.

"He is in his private office, now, if you will step in there," indicating the back door as he spoke, and then turning to the others he continued:

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you will please come back in an hour you will all be attended to," and he half-invited, half-urged the crowd to leave the room, finally succeeding, and closing the door and locking it as the last one disappeared.

"There, Miss Reade," he cried, in his natural voice, "I have gotten rid of that mob, and now, if you will step into that office, where we cannot be overheard, I will tell you why I sent for you in such haste."

When they were seated, he continued:

"I received your note telling me of the

conversation you had overheard between the two Temples, and taking that as a basis, I find that on the evening you mention, or rather that night, a forcible abduction took place from a certain house on 126th street.

"It has taken me until now to find this out, as I did not know where Mervyn Temple had hidden his wife, and had to work carefully to discover the location.

"But last night I found the house, and saw Mrs. Merton's maid."

"And she told you all?"

"She knew very little, but that little I learned from her."

"It seems that on the night in question Felice, as she is called, was summoned to the front door by a ring at the bell, and on opening it was seized, placed in a closed carriage and driven away."

"No harm was offered her, and by daylight the next morning she was set down in front of the house, where she had to wait until the cook arrived before she could get in."

"On going to her mistress's apartments she found them untenanted, and has had no news of Mrs. Merton since."

"Then the poor woman is doubtless imprisoned in the house of the doctor—'Girardi' was his name, I believe."

"And do you know what sort of a house that is?"

"No; a private dwelling, I suppose."

"Say a private mad-house and you will be nearer the mark."

"A mad-house!"

"Yes, Miss Reade."

"But Mrs. Merton is not insane."

"That makes little difference to the proprietors of private mad-houses; if she is not insane now she will soon be made so by the treatment she will receive."

"You horrify me!"

"Yes, it is horrible, for these wretches, well knowing that if a person is really insane they must remain in the asylum, spare no efforts to drive those mad who are placed in their hands for safe-keeping."

"For safe-keeping? What do you mean?"

"Why, that husbands who wish to get rid of their wives, wives who are tired of their husbands, sons whose fathers are in the way, fathers who find their sons obstacles to some of their plans, mothers, sisters, brothers, nephews, cousins, all rely on the private asylum to rid them of their obnoxious relatives."

"And do such places really exist?"

"They do, and one of the worst of them is managed by 'Doctor' Girardi."

"And that poor girl is now in his power, and has been for some days! Can you not appeal to the law to aid you in effecting her release?"

"The law?"

"Yes, invoke what I have heard called the 'might and majesty' of the law."

"The 'might and majesty' of the law would be powerless here, for what claim have we upon Mrs. Merton, and how can we prove her sanity, even if she be sane?"

"If she be sane?"

"Yes; for I've no doubt that such inhuman tortures have been inflicted upon her before this, that her mind is affected, and that she is now really if only temporarily insane."

"But what can I do?"

"You can do much; you told me that Mr. Temple had spoken of putting you in an asylum."

"Yes, the day I met him at his house."

"Then you must enter the Retreat; for there he will doubtless send you, and endeavor to communicate with and rescue Mrs. Merton."

"Do you dare brave the dangers, the insults, the tortures that will be inflicted on you in that den?"

"Stop! do not answer until I have finished!"

"You do not alone enter that place for the sole purpose of rescuing an innocent, suffering girl; but you go in search of other clues that may lead to the discovery of your father's murderer, for something tells me that through your connection with Gia' Merton, or Gia' Gisela, as she is sometimes called, you will learn much that is now unknown to either you or to me."

"Now, what is your answer?"

"My answer is that, even if there were

no other object to be gained than that of aiding that poor girl, I would willingly go, and now am I doubly determined when this trail may lead me to the assassin of my father."

"One thing more: I have so arranged matters that Mervyn Temple's yacht will, by to-morrow, be manned by a crew upon whom we can depend entirely, so that if you succeed in rescuing Mrs. Merton I will have a refuge provided for her on which she will rapidly regain her health if she is suffering."

"Day and night, at all hours, you will find in a small shed about a half a mile to the north of the 'Retreat,' a carriage and pair, in charge of one of my men."

"The shed you will find locked, but if you call out 'Open to the Crooked Pin!' my man will understand and admit you."

"Take the carriage and suffer him to drive you where he will; the instructions I will give him will cover all of his following movements."

"The shed or stable is on the road?"

"Directly, on the road, to the right as you go north."

"Two things more."

"A dozen if you wish."

"Who handed me your note?"

"Your brother, Herbert."

"My brother!"

"Yes; and to-morrow he will be in command of the 'Gleam.'"

"And you will buy her?"

"No; that is not part of my plan."

"My second question is: How long shall I remain with Miss Rivers?"

"No longer; return to your former rooms with Mrs. Morton, and resume your natural appearance."

"Vane Temple will undoubtedly soon call on you and you must do whatever he suggests."

"But Miss Rivers?"

"I will arrange that; you have made important discoveries since you entered her service and need not return, at present."

"After your escape, possibly."

"I will write her?"

"Yes, copy this and send it by mail."

"And now, good-by; fear nothing, and let your motto be: 'Hope and courage!'"

"I have hope, and will have courage."

"Then you need fear nothing."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MORE "DISCIPLINE."

"COME, come, no shamming!" cried a harsh voice, as Gia' sunk helpless on the floor, half-suffocated and wholly chilled from the icy flood.

"We don't allow no 'possuming here! Get up and take this!"

And a rough hand was laid heavily on her shoulder, she was forced into a sitting position, and her head being thrown back, a nauseous draught was forced down her throat, she being too weak to defend herself except faintly.

The bitter potion, disgusting as it was, had at least the beneficial result of instantly warming her into renewed life and vigor, and under its influence her blood began to course madly through her veins, her brain whirled, lurid lights danced before her eyes, and a wild exhilaration took possession of her entire being.

Raising her eyes she saw that the female of forbidding aspect, known as Mrs. Strake, stood before her, and that it was her hand that had administered the medicine, so, appealing to her in the mildest language, her thoughts being affected by the potion she had swallowed, she cried:

"Oh, jailorress of mine, soften the treatment that you would inflict upon me, release these my chains and let me wander yonder on the banks of that purling stream that babbles so noisily on its course."

"Let me stray in those green fields and pluck the flowers that dot their verdant plains, and listen to the birds who chime their voices—"

"Oh take them away, those horrid, crawling things that creep upon me!"

"Those are not flowers I see, but the glittering eyes of venomous serpents that thrust their forked tongues at me and worm their slimy trail in my direction!"

"Take them away! take them away!"

"Oh!" and with a wild shriek, she again fell to the floor and lay there insensible.

Cold and callous as the stone walls of the cell, Mrs. Strake leaned over her a moment and satisfied herself that the girl was entirely unconscious, and then, loosening the straps, lifted the inanimate girl with the utmost ease and carried her two doors further down the hall to where a massive, solid door gave entrance to a cell that was dark as mid night.

Entering, she placed Gia' roughly on a straw pallet that lay on the floor, and then, evidently fearful lest the girl might die—and that was no part of the policy of the "Retreat," patients with rich friends being too valuable to lose—she removed her wet clothing and replaced it by a heavy woolen sack that hung on the wall.

Then, seeing that Gia' had fallen into a deep slumber, her fainting-fit having gradually lapsed into sleep, she left the cell, locking the door after her, while the unconscious girl slumbered on, undisturbed.

How long she lay thus she never knew, for when she awoke it was pitch dark in the cell, and not knowing that her quarters had been changed, she thought that it must either be the same night on which she had arrived or the succeeding one.

She was consumed with a terrible thirst, her throat was parched and dry, while her head ached as if it would split, and her brain fairly reeled from the shocks she had received, while her memory was indistinct and her mind was clouded and dulled.

The potion was effecting its deadly work! She had not been long awake when the door was unlocked, and Mrs. Strake appeared, carrying a lamp and a tray on which was a delicious lunch, accompanied by a large pot of tea and a brimming pitcher of water, against the sides of which vessel the ice tinkled musically, and aroused Gia's thirst almost to madness.

Rising and seizing the pitcher, the girl drained it almost to the bottom, and then set it on the floor with a sigh of relief as she asked her grim jailorress, timidly:

"Won't you please tell me what time it is?"

"Four o'clock," replied Mrs. Strake, gruffly.

"Only four o'clock, and I arrived here about three. Have I only been asleep an hour?"

"You have been asleep nearer twelve hours. It is now four o'clock in the afternoon."

"In the afternoon!"

"That is what I said; are you deaf?"

"But it is so dark."

"Come, eat this, and hurry, for I will be back for the lamp in half an hour," and placing the light and tray on the floor, she again left the room, Gia' being able to see that there were two doors to the cell, and that no ray of light, no sound could enter.

Famished as she was, she felt so ill that the very sight of the food almost made her sick, yet she forced herself to eat a few mouthfuls that she might not entirely lose her strength, although it was all she could do to swallow it, while the tea proved by far the most acceptable portion of the meal.

And in a short half an hour Mrs. Strake returned, and, regardless of Gia's prayers and entreaties, removed the lamp, and again bolted the girl in, leaving her in total darkness.

So, soon the hallucinations brought into being by her disordered brain, returned, and the room became peopled with all kinds of visions, that danced before her staring eyes, and promised soon to unbalance her reason, and leave her a helpless maniac.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BEATRICE AND HER LOVER.

WHEN Beatrice reached Mrs. Morton's, she was received by that estimable lady with every possible expression of joyful welcome, and was soon comfortably installed in her former apartments, which her landlady had reserved for her.

"And where have you been, and what have you been doing, Miss Trixie?" asked Mrs. Morton, beaming on her young friend in the most glowing manner.

"I cannot tell you now, Mrs. Morton, and must ask you to be patient and wait."

"Will you get me some lunch, and bring it up in half an hour, or say an hour?"

"I have a letter to write and some change to make in my dress, and do not want to see any one who may ask for me, yet."

"By the way, has any one called to see me since I went away?"

"Mr. Jeffrey asks for you every day, miss, but I could not tell him where you were, and he seemed much disappointed."

"If he comes in this afternoon, I will see him," said the girl, blushing violently, and covering her face with her hands.

"Very well, Miss Trixie, and glad enough he'll be to see you once more."

"And now I'll go and get your lunch."

"Thank you," and as the door closed Beatrice drew out the letter Ferrett had given her and read it.

It was as follows:

"NEW YORK, June 10, 187—.

"MY DEAR MISS RIVERS:—

"I do not know what you will think of me after you read these lines that I send you, but I beg, I pray you, suspend judgment for the present at least, and do not feel harshly toward me."

"I cannot divulge a secret that is not my own and must ask you to believe in me and not to consider me ungrateful or selfish in thus leaving you; but I cannot return to Westview and must request you to consider me as no longer in your employ."

"Be patient and soon, very soon, I trust, the clouds will be dispelled and light will be thrown on what now seems all dark to you."

"Will you send my things to the general Express Office—they are all packed—and will you let me sign myself,

Your loving friend,

"LINDA READE."

"I add no address as no answer is necessary and I wish to spare myself the bitterness of reading any cold words that you might send me."

"A cruel, cold letter, without any explanation in extenuation of my abrupt departure!"

"What will she think of me!"

"But time will show her that I am not the selfish girl she will undoubtedly think me, and I must await that time as patiently as I can, for it is best so."

"And now to copy this and mail it to Miss Rivers, although I must first resume my natural appearance," and rising she retired to her room, where she removed the stain from her face, after taking off her black wig, and then changed her dress.

Then re-entering the sitting-room, she copied, inclosed and directed her letter and had just completed it when there came a knock on the door, and in response to her answer a tall, fine-looking young fellow stepped in, closed the door carefully after him and then crying "Beatrice!" extended his arms as the happy, blushing girl threw herself on his breast, sobbing with joy.

"Oh, Allan, I am so glad to see you!" cried the girl, as her lover held her close. "I have wanted to see you for ever so long, and did not know what you might think of my abrupt and unexplained departure."

"I thought, of course, that something had happened that had suddenly called you away and have been hoping to hear from you."

"I did intend writing to-day, Allan, but as I am here I hope that this meeting will make up for the most of the letter."

"Yes, indeed, it does; but tell me, little girl, where have you been, and what have you been doing?"

"That I can not tell you, dear, and hope that you will not ask me; some day, perhaps—"

"On our wedding day, darling?"

"Yes, Allan," whispered the girl, rosy red as she hid her face in the broad chest and nestled closer in the infolding arms.

"Then let that day be to-morrow," cried Jeffrey, impetuously. "Give up this life that is wearing you out, and as my wife you can pursue your investigations untrammelled; for I suppose that you still cling to the idea that your father was robbed."

"Yes, Allan," and looking around and lowering her voice she whispered:

"And I believe more: I believe that he was not only robbed of his property but I believe, also, that he was murdered!"

"Murdered!"

"Yes; I can tell you no more, but I have vowed never to rest, never to lay my hand in yours and speak the words that will make me your wife, until his assassin is trailed to the end, and the mystery surrounding his death is solved!"

"And you think that you can do all this?"

"I firmly believe it."

"Allan, you have always been kindness itself to me and my father looked favorably on you as my future husband, and when the crash came you stepped forward and asked me to become your wife as soon as circumstances would permit; but I had to say 'No.'"

"And then, fearing that I might get into trouble you left your home, with all of its comforts, and took rooms here that you might be near and protect me, your identity being known to me alone."

"For all of this chivalrous conduct I thank you again and again, dear Allan, but must ask you to continue your kindness to me by not interfering in any manner with my plans."

"I am, I believe, rapidly nearing my goal, and the circle is rapidly narrowing around those I believe guilty."

"Please, Allan, please say yes to what I ask, and should I disappear suddenly, mysteriously, do not worry, but wait patiently for the end."

"On the day I bring my father's murderers to justice I will lay my hand in yours and say:

"Allan, I am yours; do with me as you will!"

"And this is my answer, darling," and bending forward he pressed his lips to hers that sought them so confidently, just as the door opened and Mrs. Morton entered with the lunch.

"Excuse me, my children," she cried, bustling about to cover their confusion, "an' don't mind me."

"Go on with your billin' and cooin', for all the world like two turtle doves, for youth an' kissin' goes together."

"We need no apologies, Mrs. Morton," said Jeffrey, heartily, "but I hope that we will soon come to you and ask you to congratulate us."

"An' that I'll do most 'eartily, Mr. Jeffrey, an' a fairer bride no sun ever shone on no time."

"Now, Allan," said Beatrice, looking at her lover fondly, "you will be my guest?"

"As you will be mine for many long years, I accept."

And soon with the nice lunch before them that Mrs. Morton had prepared, they forgot that any one existed in the world but themselves and were as happy as two children, let loose from school, with the prospect of a long holiday before them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DOUBLE TRAGEDY.

It was the evening of the day on which Allan Jeffrey lunched with Beatrice, of the day on which Gia awakened and having begged her jaileress to leave the light with her had been rudely rebuffed and left in total darkness.

It was nearly ten o'clock and the clear sky had given place to black clouds from which descended a steady downpour of rain, sending all home who were not compelled by their duties to remain abroad, and causing those who were unable to seek their rooms and homes to growl and grumble at the fearful storm.

The streets were well-nigh deserted and only an occasional solitary figure could be seen as it hurried along, anxious to reach shelter.

Policemen, lurking in convenient doorways, gave up all thought of controlling their regular beats and allowed even the most suspicious-looking characters to slink by unchallenged and seemed to have determined to let the city guard itself that night.

Low dives and thieves' resorts disgorged their hordes of evil-doers and the back streets and darker alleys fairly swarmed with gangs of thieves and cut-throats, who reveled in the inclemency of the weather as affording them better opportunity to work their evil deeds.

A night, in fact, when good men remain at home while criminals prowl.

Down one of the darkest narrowest, filthiest streets of all of the squalid quarter lying along the lower end of the Bowery and then on to the Five Points, a man was hurrying, seemingly unconscious of the driving rain that beat in his face and soaked his light

overcoat and streamed in trickling drops from the rim of his silk hat.

As he walked rapidly along, it could be seen, as he passed under the occasional street lamps, that he was young, handsome and elegantly dressed, while a heavy watch-chain dangled in front of his vest and a diamond sparkled in his shirt front, for he was in full dress and wore patent-leather shoes, and a white cravat was carefully tied under his collar.

Finally he stopped a moment under a gas-jet and drawing a heavy hunting-case watch from his pocket, consulted it by the dim light shed from above:

"Whew!" he whistled, "nearly ten o'clock—within five minutes of it, and my engagement was for half-past nine!"

"Old Buzzard will be in a pretty stew at being kept waiting so long! What the deuce shall I say to him? I wish I had hurried away from that dinner instead of going to the—"

"What do you want, sir!" addressing an evil-looking man, who at that moment slunk alongside of him, having emerged suddenly from behind a convenient pile of beer kegs that stood in front of an adjacent saloon.

"I wuz only a-wantin' ter know ther time o' night, boss."

"Ef it's gittin' on ter ten I mus' be a-thinkin' o' retirin' to my boodwar an' smokin' my evenin' pipe afore retirin' to my downy bed."

"Well, you'd better be hunting some place soon or the cops will be along and if I am not mistaken that villainous mug of yours will prove a sure passport to the Island."

"Now look yer', boss," said the tramp, trying to approach closer to the other, who eyed him warily and kept backing off.

"Don't yer go fer ter giv' me none o' your little bluff games, fer I won't hev it."

"And you look here, my man, don't you try to get close enough to me to nip my 'super and slang' and my 'spark,' or you'll find yourself in hock too quick."

"A fly-cop, by the red-hot joker, hey, boys, 'ere's a lark."

In response to the cry three other rough-looking characters sneaked out from an area near by and quickly approached the two men, one of them saying:

"Wot's hup, Mixey?"

"Ere's a swell bloke all togged out fer a hevenin'-party, wot's givin' me a stiff an' tryin' ter pass 'imself off fur a peeler."

"Belt 'im one on the conk, an' see 'ow 'is nob's likes that."

The only answer to this threat was the sudden springing back of the stranger into the middle of the street, while a sharp "click, click," sounded out on the stillness of the night, and warned the gang of thieves that their adversary was armed and ready for any emergency.

"Look out, pals, 'e's got a barker!" shouted the man addressed as Mixey, as he drew back as if he feared that a report might follow the drawing of the revolver.

"Yes, and I'll shoot the first man that attempts to approach me, I warn you in time, and—"

A crushing, sickening thud crashed out on the still street and plunging forward he fell headlong to the ground where he lay insensible and apparently dead.

One of the gang, who had been in hiding on the other side of the way, had stolen up behind him unperceived and had struck him with terrific force just behind the ear, using as his weapon a short, thick bludgeon, with a knob on the end as large as his fist.

"Inter ther cellar with him, fellers, and when we've got his spon's we'll jest chuck him in ther hole an' give 'im a swim."

So picking up the insensible man, they carried him down into the area whence some of them had emerged, through the door into a cellar that was dark and dank, and thence into an adjoining vault, the walls of which were dripping with moisture.

Here they laid their victim on the floor, and the door having been securely fastened, one of the men struck a light, and lit a smoky lantern that hung from the ceiling.

Then they turned their attention to the prostrate man, and with a celerity that showed long practice, turned his pockets inside out, and robbed him of everything of value that he possessed in a jiffy, even

going so far as to strip him of his broad-cloth coat, vest and trowsers, and his patent-leather boots.

Then one of them raised a sort of a trap in the floor, when a sound as if of rushing water issued from the opening thus made, and two of their number, taking the inanimate figure by the head and heels, were about to launch it into the hole, when a slight noise at the door attracted their attention, and caused them to hesitate a moment.

The ruffian who carried the bludgeon then, grasping his stick firmly, went to the door, opened it, and looked into the next cellar, when, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he turned, leaving the door open, and said:

"Go ahead, boys; it's nuthin' but rats!"

Instantly his two comrades raised the body, and, with a swing, plunged it through the hole, when at the same moment a slight, boyish figure dashed into the room from the outer cellar, fired two shots right and left, scattering the men from about the trap, and bringing one of their number to the ground, and then, without hesitating an instant, leaped headlong into the running stream below, and was borne away like a flash.

CHAPTER XXX.

A GIRL'S COURAGE.

When Beatrice and Jeffrey had finished their lunch, the girl arose, and having set the tray outside the door, said:

"And now, Allan, you must leave me, and when I shall see you again I do not know; but if I can I will write to you and keep you informed as to my health, although my whereabouts must remain a secret, for you, with your usual impetuosity, would probably come in search of me, and ruin all my plans."

"Then you will not let me know what those plans are?"

"Allan, I cannot! Much as I would like to it is impossible; only have faith in me, and all will be explained before long."

"I have the utmost faith, darling. And now, good-by."

"Good-by, Allan. Think of me sometimes."

"Every hour, Beatrice!" And kissing her fondly, he left the room and the house, the girl standing at the window and watching him as he disappeared, while her eyes filled with tears.

When he was out of sight she sat down to wait, for what she did not know, but she felt confident that something would happen very soon, and that the hour for action would soon arrive, and wished to be prepared for whatever might happen.

The afternoon waned, and darkness came on until the street lamps were lighted, and a heavy rain set in which promised to last all night, when suddenly there came a sharp peal at the bell, and in a few moments the servant tapped on her door and entered.

"A parcel and a note for you, Miss Beatrice," she said.

"Is there any answer?"

"No, mum, the boy did not wait."

"Thank you, then; no, nothing else."

And as the girl closed the door after her, Beatrice lighted the gas, and, opening the note, read these words:

"I have a clew that I think will lead to valuable results, and am to meet a certain man to-night at half-past nine o'clock."

"Buzzard," as he is called, declines to give me his information unless you are represented, and as what he says he has to tell me concerns you nearly, I suggest that you come in person."

"It is a disagreeable errand, but if you have the courage I advise you to come."

"Be at the corner of Grand street and the Bowery at 9:30 sharp and I will pass along there, dressed in an evening suit, as I must attend a dinner, and will not have time to change my attire."

"Do not speak to me, but follow me at a distance of half a block, and when I enter a house wait outside until I come; it is only by these means that I can reach the end."

"Dress yourself in the clothes I send, and fear nothing, for no harm can come to you, particularly as I send two small revolvers, which do not hesitate to use in case of need, as there are thousands of rough characters in the neighborhood you will visit."

There was no signature to the note; but Beatrice readily recognized the writing as being that of Ferrett, and did not hesitate to decide that she would do as directed.

Opening the parcel, she found that it contained a complete suit of boy's clothing, as

well as a skull-cap, all of which promised to fit her nicely, and a small pair of handsome revolvers, every chamber of which was loaded; so going to her room, she quickly disrobed and dressed herself, and then came out into the sitting-room just as Mrs. Morton appeared.

"Good-morning, sir," said the old lady, evidently much surprised at the sight of a stranger.

"Can you tell me if Miss Trixie has gone out?"

"No, Mrs. Morton, 'Miss Trixie' has not gone out, but stands before you."

"Well, bless my soul, and what does this masqueradin' mean?"

"It means that I am going out for a time, Mrs. Morton, and as I may not be in until late, I am going to ask you to let me have a night-key, so that I can get in whenever I wish."

"A nice state of affairs, when young ladies go gallivanting about in boys' clothes," grumbled the old lady, "and stay out so late that they have to ask for night-keys!"

"But I need it, Mrs. Morton, and some day you will understand everything."

"Well, well, my dear, I suppose that it is all right, but what would Mr. Jeffrey think of you if he saw you in this disguise?"

"He has enough faith and confidence in me to know that it means that I am compelled to adopt it, temporarily, and would ask no questions at all."

"Here is the key, then, Miss Trixie; is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Yes, you can invite me to come downstairs to your sitting-room and join you in a cup of tea that I may then slip out through the area without being seen."

"That I will do gladly enough, so come along my dear, come along."

Toward eight o'clock, Beatrice, wearing a rubber overcoat that belonged to her brother, slipped out of the area door and hurried away to one of the avenues, where she boarded a down-town car, and turning and looking out of the window so as to hide her face as much as possible, rode on until she arrived at Grand street, where she alighted and hurried across town until she reached the place of rendezvous.

No particular corner had been mentioned in the note, so, selecting one where an awning projected over the sidewalk, which would shelter her from the rain, she began to patiently wait for the passing of Ferrett, keeping a sharp lookout up and down the almost deserted street.

Nine o'clock struck from some distant clock, and then half-past nine, and she had become almost discouraged, when she heard a ringing footstep hurrying along on the other side of the street, and looking, she saw that a man, dressed in a full evening suit, was walking rapidly down-town, and crossing over, as if he had caught sight of her, passed within a few feet of where she was standing, lifting his finger almost imperceptibly as he hurried by.

Although she saw his face distinctly she felt that she would never have recognized him had she not been expecting him, but as there could now be no doubt that it was Ferret, she left her post and hastened after him, keeping some distance in the rear and being careful not to approach too close.

She saw him stop and speak to the man who accosted him and was a horrified witness of all that followed, but the delicately nurtured and shrinking girl was so horrified that for a few moments she was unable to move, and forgot all about the weapons she carried.

But as the men, carrying the body disappeared, she bounded into an instant activity and her courage returned at once, so hurrying forward she found the door through which they had gone, and as they had neglected to fasten it she stole cautiously into the outer cellar.

A faint ray of light showed where the men were assembled, and tip-toeing her way carefully in that direction, she endeavored to find a chink in the door through which she could look, while she listened intently.

But she could see and hear nothing, when in moving about her foot struck against an empty tin can that lay on the ground, producing the noise the thieves had heard, and causing their leader to open the door, but Beatrice had blotted herself into one corner

and there stood so motionless that she could not be seen.

Then stealing to the door she looked in and seeing what was being done and realizing suddenly that she was armed she sprung into the room like lightning, fired two shots right and left and without stopping to think what she did plunged into the swollen flood below, intent on saving the injured man if she could.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

WHEN Beatrice struck the raging current into which she had thrown herself so recklessly, she realized how desperate her chances of escape were, for she knew not whither this torrent would bear her, and being in utter darkness contented herself with trying to keep afloat, and having had ample experience at Long Branch and other seaside resorts, found no difficulty in doing so, being a fine swimmer both by teaching and practice.

Fearing, however, that she might encounter some obstacle which would injure her she kept her head as low and as near the surface of the water as she could, and struck out with all of her strength that she might increase her speed and overtake the body that was doubtless only a short distance before her.

She had scarcely taken twenty strokes when her outstretched hand encountered some foreign substance, and feeling again she found that it was a man's head, so clutching it tightly by the hair she bore it up and tried to keep the face above the water.

But this doubled her exertions and her strength was rapidly deserting her when she suddenly became conscious of a roaring and a rushing noise some distance ahead, which increased in volume, until, all at once they plunged down some feet and were dashed into another stream of water and swept off abruptly to the right.

And then for the first time she began to have some little hope as she believed that they were now in one of the main sewers of the city and would soon, on account of the tremendous speed of the current, which was heightened by the tremendous rainfall, be swept down to where the sewer emptied into the harbor.

And so it proved, for not long after, while she was struggling and panting in her efforts to sustain her companion, they were suddenly swept out of the sewer into the salt waters of the harbor, the iron grating which closed the mouth of the sewer having been removed by some one, and floated some distance from shore in the dancing waves.

Beatrice was exhausted, worn out, her strength gone and her grasp on the man she had tried to save, myriads of lights danced before her eyes and she was about to close them and give up when something dark loomed right above her and extending her free hand she grasped with a drowning clutch, a heavy oar that was extended from the side of a rowboat that was passing.

"Hullo," cried a voice, "w'ot's this that has fouled my oar!"

And in piteous accents came back the appeal from the bosom of the waters:

"Help! help!"

"I'm blowed ef it ain't some cove a-drowning, Bill," and then a hand was extended, a vigorous grasp seized her arm, and she, being drawn alongside, was lifted into the boat, still clutching her companion by the hair.

"Blessed ef there ain't two of 'em!" repeated the voice, and then the inanimate man was lifted in, while Beatrice sunk to the bottom of the boat completely exhausted, while her rescuer, removing his coat placed it under her head and then cried:

"Pull for the ship, Bill, she's in the next dock, an' we'll see ef these 'ere pussons is drowned sure enuff."

And under their vigorous strokes the little craft bounded forward and was soon alongside a huge vessel that was moored alongside the adjoining pier.

Here the two sufferers were quickly lifted on board and carried to the cabin, when Beatrice found herself able to sit up and, declining any assistance, urged her rescuers to give all their attention to her companion.

One of the men, being captain of the ship,

possessed a certain knowledge of surgery, and under his care the wounded man, in the course of an hour, was able to sit up and say a few words, when it was found that owing to his tall silk hat having been tilted back on his head, it had broken the force of the blow and that his insensibility arose more from the water he had swallowed than from any serious injury.

He had, before being thrown into the sewer, pretended to be unconscious as he had feared that the man who had attacked him might kill him outright rather than run any risk of future detection.

He had been taken into the captain's room and the door closed, so that Beatrice knew nothing of his being restored to consciousness until the mate, coming into the cabin, informed her of the fact, and asked her how she was getting along.

"I am chilled through and through," replied the girl, hardly able to speak, so loudly did her teeth chatter.

"Well, you're a weak-looking sort of a lad, an' had better take care; can't I do something for you?"

"You can, if you will promise me one thing and never reveal it until I give you permission to do so."

"An' w'at is that?"

"Are you married?"

"Well, I should think so, and have got a boy 'bout your age; but, Lor'! he's twice't as big as you be."

"And have you any daughters?"

"One, as fine a girl as ye ever see; they are a-livin' right up here, while the ship is in port, but always go with me when I'm on a cruise."

"But, why do you ask?"

"For this reason: I am not what I appear. I am in disguise, and am—a girl!"

"Whew!" whistled the mate, "a gurl! W'y my poor little one you come right over to the house an' my wife an' darter'll see to you."

"A gurl!" and repeating, his favorite expression he muttered again and again:

"Well, I am blowed!"

Then after calling to the captain he told him that he would be back in a short time, adding:

"Tell the young feller his gurl is all right!" and leaving the worthy skipper in a maze of bewilderment he went up the companion-way, followed by Beatrice, and, descending the side of the vessel and aiding the girl, led the way to where his wife lived.

While they hurried along Beatrice told him as briefly as she could, what had happened, asking him to tell his wife afterward and ending by saying:

"My father was murdered and I am alone in the world, except for my brother, and ask you to pity and believe an orphan girl!"

And the kind old sailor, wiping something that was not a rain-drop from his eye replied, huskily:

"Of course, I believe you, my poor child, an' anything that Jack Parker, or his wife can do for ye, ye can bet will be done!"

And arriving at a substantial-looking building he went to the second floor, opened a door and stepping inside said:

"Wife, here's a poor child w'ot's been nearly drowned; come out an' take care of her."

And the motherly-looking woman coming into the hall, he continued:

"Don't ask no questions, but take care of her, fur the sake of our lost girl."

And Mrs. Parker without objecting in the least threw open another door and said kindly:

"Come in here, my pore lamb, and I'll take good care of you for my missing daughter's sake!"

And in a short time Beatrice was made comfortable in a snowy bed, when Mate Parker mumbled from outside in his deepest voice, as he held the door half-open:

"Rest easy, my pretty, and don't worry. I'll bring you news of your sweetheart in the morning."

For Mate Parker, judging from what he had seen and learned, had come to the—to him—satisfactory conclusion that Beatrice and the man she had saved were lovers and his interest in her was much increased in consequence.

And as the girl lay there the different noises of street and house gradually died

away, and at length, utterly worn out, she closed her eyes and fell into a deep sleep that lasted until far into the next day.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

SHE was not disturbed for some time after she awoke, but at length the door was softly opened and Mrs. Parker looked in.

"Oh, my lamb," she cried, heartily, "and how do you feel now?"

"Perfectly well, thank you, and entirely rested."

"That's right, and do you feel hungry?"

"Very."

"Then wait a minute and I'll bring you in some breakfast."

"Then I'll get up if you'll bring me my—"

But she suddenly stopped, terribly confused as she recollected that she had nothing there but the boy's suit that she had worn.

"I think that you had better stay in bed until you have eaten your breakfast, and then, if you like, I'll let my daughter bring you some things of hers to put on, for yours are hardly dry yet."

"Is there any one here who can go to my home for me?"

"Why, my son will go, he hasn't anything to do."

"Then if you'll be kind enough to give me a sheet of paper and a pencil I will send for some things."

"Certainly, my dear, here you are," and Mrs. Parker took the desired materials from a stand drawer near by.

Beatrice then quickly wrote a short note to Mrs. Morton, asking her to send her a sachel containing the articles she enumerated and if possible to accompany the messenger, who was quickly dispatched with strong injunctions from his mother not to loiter by the way.

And soon a delicious little meal was set before her, the tray being placed on the white spread, and Beatrice propped up with a half-a-dozen pillows and made thoroughly and entirely comfortable.

"You will spoil me, Mrs. Parker," she laughed, as the mate's wife bustled about, pouring out her tea and cutting and buttering the flaky white bread.

"Never you mind me, jest you eat as much as you can, an' when that is gone call for more, if you want it."

"Mrs. Parker," at length said Beatrice, timidly, "have you seen your husband this morning, or has he not yet come?"

"Of course, how I do forget! He was here bright and early an' says that the young gentleman is doing finely an' will be up to see you by noon."

"And he is not seriously hurt?"

"No, my pretty; but he says that if it hadn't been for you, he would have drowned, sure enough."

And so, with her breakfast and chatting away, the morning passed until finally a heavy step was heard on the stairs, the rustle of a dress sounded outside, and Mrs. Morton burst in crying:

"Where is Miss Trixie! where is my Miss Trixie!"

And then she rushed to the side of the bed like a whirlwind and clasping Beatrice in her warm embrace burst out crying and laughing as if she intended to go into instant hysterics.

But when she had subsided somewhat she turned to Mrs. Parker and stammered:

"I b-b beg your p-p-pardon, mum, but"—and then she stopped, wiped her eyes vigorously and cried:

"W'y, Betsy Briggs!"

And the answer came back like an echo.

"W'y Betsy Biggs!"

And the two women, Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Morton, threw themselves into each other's arms, while Beatrice gazed at them in astonishment.

When they had vented their feelings by copious floods of tears, Mrs. Morton turned to Beatrice and explained to her that she and Mrs. Parker had been friends many years before and, had for a long time, lived in the same house with each other, Mrs. Morton's name, then, before she had been married, being Betsy Biggs and Mrs. Parker's Betsy Briggs.

Mutual congratulations followed and Mrs. Parker seemed delighted to learn that

Beatrice could be thus vouched for by Mrs. Morton, as the circumstances of her coming to the house were, to say the least, peculiar.

And then, Mrs. Morton having unpacked the sachel she had brought and laid the things it contained on the foot of the bed, she and Mrs. Parker left the room to talk over old times and give Beatrice an opportunity to dress.

The girl had just put the finishing touches to her toilet, when there came a knock on the door, and Mrs. Parker's daughter, Lizzie, as she announced herself, called out and asked Beatrice if she would step into the sitting-room, which she did and found it deserted, the two friends having retired to the kitchen where they both felt more at ease.

And soon Mate Parker appeared and walking up to Beatrice, shook hands with her warmly, when the girl, without a word, raised her head and kissed him on his weather-beaten and furrowed cheek.

"Well, well, lass," said the old man, much pleased, "who would have thought that you would have kissed an old man like me! But you'd better keep your kisses for him, he's below."

"He? who?"

"Who? Ha! ha! ha! Is there any more than one Him in the world for you?"

"Why, I mean the young fellow you saved from drownin'."

"Oh!"

"Yes, an' he's precious anxious to see you an' to thank you for savin' his life; we told him all about it an'—shall I call him up?"

"Yes, sir, if you will; he is not much hurt?"

"Oh, no, he's all right," and going to the head of the stairs he called out in a voice that rumbled like distant thunder and which fairly shook the building:

"Shipmet ahoy! come up!"

And then a light step came bounding up and entered the room, when the new-comer closed the door and as Beatrice turned to greet him, extended his arms to her.

"Allan!" she cried, shrinking back as if frightened.

"Yes, Beatrice, it is I."

"And how do you happen to be here?"

"Do you not understand?"

"No, what does it mean?"

"Why, that Ferrett sent for me, and that I have just left him, having seen him in a carriage, and safely on his way home."

"But how does it happen that you know him so well?"

"My darling, that is something that I will not be able to tell you just now; as I do not ask you to confide your secrets to me, can I not beg you to let that question remain unanswered until—say until we are married?"

"Yes, Allan, certainly, for without mutual confidence and trust there can be no real abiding love."

"But tell me, dear," she continued, when they were seated near the window, Jeffrey holding her hand affectionately, "is Mr. Ferrett much hurt?"

"No more than I am; he escaped by a miracle, and you afterward saved his life, brave little girl that you are."

"Allan," knitting her brows, and apparently in deep perplexity, "Mr. Parker said you were below, and wanted to thank me for saving your life. What does this mean?"

Jeffrey hummed and hawed a moment, and then answered:

"He has evidently gotten Ferrett and me confounded; that is the only explanation that I can give."

And just then, apparently much to his relief, a knock sounded on the door, and Mate Parker bawled out:

"Shipmet, dinner is ready! Come, you an' the lass—come!"

"All right, Mr. Parker; Beatrice, will you join the others in the dining-room, while I say a word to your host?"

"More mystery, Allan?"

"Yes, my love, more mystery; but, Heaven willing, it will not last long."

And, shortly after Beatrice was seated at the table, protesting that she had breakfasted so late that she could not eat a mouthful, Mate Parker and Allan entered, the former nodding and winking, and swelling with importance, while his broad, red, good-natured face glowed like the sun with kindness and hospitality.

And it was a merry party that sat gathered at that table, although for a long time Mrs. Morton could not be prevailed upon to sit down with Miss Trixie, saying that she owed more respect to her old employer's daughter than that.

But when Mate Parker finally swore by his fore-to-gall'nt-s'l that he would send her to the mast-head if she persisted in her refusal, she took her seat, much terrified by the threat, which was all the more to be dreaded as she did not comprehend in the least what he meant by it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A STORY OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

THEY talked and laughed and chatted for some time, Mate Parker leading the hilarity until finally Beatrice, who was seated by his side, leaned over to him and asked:

"You have no other children than these, have you, Mr. Parker?"

"None but Sam and Lizzie."

"And you have lost a daughter, you say; when did she die?"

Instantly the old man's face grew grave, while a hush fell over all, as if they anticipated something sad, and shared his sorrow.

"I have lost a child, who although not my own was as dear to my wife and me as if she had been our own flesh and blood, for her father gave his life for mine and I swore to him that I would always cherish and care for his orphan child as if she were my own."

"And will you tell me about it?" asked Beatrice, stealing her little hand into his brawny one that lay half-clasped as if he were holding a rope, on his knee.

"Yes, child, yes," answered the old man, after a short silence during which he seemed lost in a reverie.

"Come into the sitting-room where I will light my pipe and tell you all about my little Cynthia and how her father died to save me."

And when he was seated in an easy-chair, Beatrice and Allan alone being present, he commenced putting slowly at his pipe:

"It was in the Mediterranean Sea that this happened—I am not much of a fist at spinnin' yarns, and so if I draw it out too long just tell me to heave-to and I'll clap a stopper on my jaw-tackle and come to anchor."

"Go on, Mr. Parker, there is no danger of your becoming tiresome."

"Well, my lass, then I'll heave ahead."

"It was a matter of fifteen year' ago, mayhap, an' as I said, I was in the Mediterranean, workin' afore the mast as a common seaman, aboard a tradin'-schooner, bound for Naples."

"We had sailed from Marseilles and were well on our voyage when, one night, about the morning watch one o' them sudden gales sprung up w'ich makes that sea so dangerous an' treacherous."

"Blow, how it did blow for a time an' when at last the gale blew itself out we found that the schooner was lookin' badly an' that, work the pumps as we would, the water gained on us steadily, an' we cum to the conclusion that it was only a question of a short time when the old ship would go down."

"We had on board a few Frenchmen, an Englishman, one American—me—an' two or three Eycetilians, makin' up as mixed a crew as you often find on a small craft, an' it was amusin' to see the way them furriners run about the deck, shriekin' an' prayin', w'en they found we was past savin' the ship."

"The captain was the Englishman, an' was the coolest man aboard, standin' on the quarter-deck an' givin' his orders as cool as if he'd been aboard a canal-boat on the Hudson, an' never gettin' a bit scared."

"At last as the ship began to sink, he gave orders to launch the boat—for we only had one—an' ordered the men to get in as their names were called, steppin' for'd to see that he was obeyed."

"What was the reason for the accident I never knew—it had probably chafed off during the storm—but as he stood there a heavy block or palley as shore folks calls it, fell from the mainmast an' strikin' him on the head, smashed his skull an' killed him—dead."

"But we had no time to spare for the dead; for the livin' was much more important, an' when he was killed there was no one to give orders but the mate, of course."

"He was an' Eyetalian an' the decentest one I ever met, an' me an' him was partik'ler friends, an' many a night I shared his watch, standin' by the taffrail, lookin' down into the deep-blue water, an' tellin' him of Betsy an' my little ones."

"He had on board with him his little daughter, as purty a little thing as ever trod the deck, an' she was a great pet o' mine, an' used to sit on my knee by the hour, prattlin' away in her baby Eyetalian about everythin' under the sun."

"Well, the schooner settled fast, an' the men was crowdin' into the boat until all was in 'ceptin' the mate an' me, one o' the sailors havin' taken the little girl, an' there was just room for one more—two of us would surely sink the boat, for it was so low in the water now that the men had to keep bailin' to prevent the sea from washin' clean over her gunwale."

"The mate an' me turned an' looked at each other, an' then he spoke up, all of a sudden an' said:

"Get into the boat, an' save yourself!"

"No," says I, stubborn too, 'you get in an' take care o' your child."

"You've got two at home an' a wife," says he, 'wile I've only got the little one there; if you are saved, swear to me that she shall be as your child, an' that you will always take care of her as of your own!"

"I won't go, an' that's the end of it!" I said, wile the crew kept callin' to us to hurry up, as they was afraid o' bein' sucked down when the schooner sunk."

"You must go!" he cried. 'Think of your wife an' babies; an' as your officer, I order you to get in that boat!"

"I'll mutiny first," said I, as stubborn as a mule, 'an' won't obey no such orders. The boat won't hold two, so git in an' I'll take my chance of floatin' about on a spar an' o' bein' picked up."

"Then, if you won't go while I am alive, maybe you will when I am dead!" he cried, an' before I knew w'ot he was doin', he drew his knife an' stabbed himself clean through the heart, fallin' to the deck an' dyin' in a second."

"An' at that minute, the schooner rolled once or twice and then went down like a shot, suckin' me down after it, while the men in the row-boat pulled away for their lives."

"But I soon rose an' caught a spar floatin' near, an' then hailin' the boat, got in, an' it was all we could do to keep the little craft from sinkin'."

"Well, we was picked up that day, and was all saved from the schooner 'ceptin' the mate, who killed himself that I might have a place in the boat."

The old man's pipe was out, and as he ceased, his chin dropped on his chest, and he seemed to be living the years gone by over again in his memory, while Beatrice cried silently and clasped his hand in sympathy."

CHAPTER XXXIV. GIA'S IDENTITY.

For some time the trio were silent until Jeffrey asked:

"And the little girl, Mr. Parker, did she die from the exposure and fright? for I understand that you say you lost her."

"No, sir, she lived; but I've often thought since that it would have been better for her to have died then, than to live to do what she afterwards did."

"We were picked up by an American vessel, homeward bound, an' the captain, when we touched at Gibraltar, where all of my shipmates left us, offered me passage home, an' so I worked my way across, bringin' Cynthia home with me, an' when I got here I told the old woman all about the child an' she took it right to her motherly bosom an' made it like one of her own."

"She lived with us, goin' on our voyages with us an' seemin' perfectly content to be with us until about two years ago, or a little less, when she began to be silent an' shy an' to mope an' seem to want to be by herself."

"She had, a little wile before that, got sort o' independent-like, an' made us let her go about the streets sellin' flowers, sayin' that she wanted to do somethin' toward sup-

portin' the family an' payin' her board, though, Lord love ye! I always made good wages an' had enough an' to spare."

"I did not like this runnin' 'round after dark, but she laughed and said she was able to take care of herself."

"She was as pretty as any one I ever see, an' spoke Eyetalian like a native, never havin' forgot it through meetin' lots of her people while wanderin' about an' could sing like a mockin' bird."

"But, not long after she got to mopin' an' frettin', durin' all w'ich time she wouldn't tell me w'ot ailed her, she went out one evenin' an' never come back, an' I have never seen or heard of her since, for I had to sail away the followin' week an' only got back tew days ago, havin' been to Australy."

"And do you think she is dead?" asked Beatrice, gently."

"I hope she is, for if she is alive I am afraid to think of the life she may be leadin'."

"If I thought that any scoundrel—" and here the old man's clinched fist fell with terrific force on the arm of his chair, and he muttered a fearful oath that made the girl tremble and boded ill to any one who might be responsible for his ward's disappearance."

To rouse him from his thoughts Jeffrey, who seemed intensely interested in this story, asked:

"Was the girl's name Cynthia, Mr. Parker?"

"That hardly sounds like an Italian name, at least I should not think so."

"No, Cynthia was only a nickname I gave her, or rather, a pet name, for her own name was too long for me to speak without unshippin' some of my tackle."

"And what was that name?"

"I've got a little book o' prayers that was the only thing saved from the wreck that belonged to her, 'ceptin' the clothes she had on, for she carried it in one of her pockets."

"Her name was writ' in it by her father, who was a better educated man than most o' them Eyetalians."

"The book is there, under that stand, under that glass case; you can look at it an' read the name."

So, rising, Allan Jeffrey went to the stand by the window and lifting the case, took out a quaint little Italian book, that showed much usage, and opening it, read the name written in ink that was faded with age, on the yellow page:

"Giacinta Gisela!"

With a bound Beatrice leaped to her feet and cried as she threw her arms about the neck of the startled old sailor:

"I thought so! I thought so!"

"She is alive, and I hope well, and from what I know of her I can say that she has never done a thing that would cause you one moment's pang or grief."

"You know my Cynthia!" cried the old man, scarcely able to believe his ears."

"I do not know her, but I know that she was honorably married, nearly two years ago, and that she was in New York not many days ago, well and happy."

"But why has she never been to see us?"

"Let her explain that when you see her—you say you went away shortly after she disappeared and she may not know where you are now, while circumstances she could not control probably prevented her telling you of her intended marriage before you went away."

"Cynthia married, happy and well!"

"Wife! wife!" cried the old tar, leaping to his feet as the full import of the happy news broke upon him, and executing a most intricate hornpipe, while as Mrs. Parker entered and gazed at him as though she thought him demented he cried:

"Our Cynthia's safe, well, happy an'—w'ot do you think besides?"

"I'm shore I don't know, Samuel, but if she's like you I guess she's gone crazy."

"No she ain't, neither," replied the old man, indignantly, "she's spliced, married, that's w'ot she is, an' has been these two year."

"Lor', Samuel, how do you know?"

"That blessed angel there, sittin' as quiet as if she hadn't brought light an' happiness to an old man's heart, told me."

"Cynthia married! Now praise Heaven for all of its mercies," she said, reverently, while her husband added a solemn

"Amen!"

"Now, Miss Trixie, tell us all about it," said Mrs. Parker, settling herself for a comfortable, confidential talk; but Beatrice quickly dampened her hopes."

"I can tell you nothing now, except that she was married, as I say, nearly two years ago to a wealthy husband, that she has had every luxury that money could purchase or care suggest, and that she was, a few days ago, well and happy."

"I can tell you no more and must beg you, entreat you, not to ask me any more questions; but promise you that, almost without doubt, she will be restored to you in a very short time."

"More I can not say, so please respect my secret and console yourselves with the thought that you will soon see her."

"We will ask nothin' more, Miss Trixie, but thank you for w'ot you have already told us, an' will try an' be patient an' wait."

And as the old man said these words solemnly and kindly, he rose and taking his hat added:

"I must go to the ship now; we will be in port for two weeks yet, Miss Trixie, an' our house is yours."

"Good-by!"

"It is 'good-by' for a time," said Beatrice, "for I must go home and may not see you for some days, but, remember! as soon as I have any news of your adopted daughter I will let you know of it."

And then, the old man having left the room, Beatrice collected her things, and bidding them all good-by, started for home with Mrs. Morton, Allan saying that he had business in another direction, and leaving them at the next corner."

CHAPTER XXXV.

OLD BUZZARD.

BEATRICE had not been long at home when the servant brought a card to her, and said that the gentleman was waiting below, and taking the bit of pasteboard, the young girl read on it:

"R. W. FERRETT."

"Ask him to come up, please," said Beatrice, and the girl leaving the room soon appeared again, ushering Mr. Ferrett up, the latter having his head bandaged, and appearing pale and as if suffering:

"I am very glad to see you again, Mr. Ferrett, and am sorry that you still seem to be troubled from the blow you received."

"That is nothing; but how can I thank you, Miss Beatrice, for saving my life?"

"It was an act of unheard-of bravery on your part, and without your aid I most assuredly would have been drowned, for I was stunned for a time, and hardly knew what had or was happening."

"What I did amounted to nothing, Mr. Ferrett; but tell me what was the reason of your sending for me?"

"I explained partially in my note; this man that you were to meet, and who is known as 'Buzzard' among the men he associates with—why, I know not—was, at the time of your father's death, in his employ."

"One of the servants, you mean?"

"Yes, one of the servants."

"And his name was—"

"That I do not know, for I have never seen him, and what I tell you of he informed me of in a note written to me some days ago."

"And that note—"

"That note said that he was troubled in his conscience, that he knew that he would soon die, and that he had a burden on his conscience that he must rid himself of before his final hour comes."

"And you think he knows something about that fearful night on which my father was murdered?"

"I do most assuredly."

"Then we must see him; but how did you hear of, and from him?"

"Many such things happen to me in my profession," replied Ferrett, evasively, "for I am brought into contact with all sorts of people."

"Then when can we see this man?"

"To-night, if you like."

"Not to-day?"

"I will go and see him now, if you will

get ready and come with me, and we will try; if we find him at home, I've no doubt that he will talk just as readily to-day as he would later."

"I will be ready in five minutes; shall I go in my ordinary dress?"

"Yes, there is no necessity of a disguise in the daytime; no one will trouble you."

"Then if you will excuse me—"

"Certainly; I will go out and send a message to my office, and will be back in ten minutes, when we can start."

An hour afterward Beatrice and Ferrett

Walking slowly down the street where the latter had been attacked the night before, and, arriving in front of the area down and through which he had been carried the girl asked:

"Have you instituted any investigation about those men?"

"My assailants?"

"Yes."

"No, I have done nothing—yet."

"Why not? I should think that your first thought would be to break up that band."

"So it was; but I decided to wait, for should I set the police on them and they should be brought up for trial, I might have to answer some awkward questions regarding what I was doing down here at that hour, dressed as I was."

"I see, but will they not escape?"

"Possibly, but as they are sure to be caught eventually, for some other crime, if not for that of last evening, it does not make much difference."

"You are very philosophical about it."

"I am compelled to be; but here we are," he added, as they stopped in front of an old, battered-looking rookery, that seemed on the point of falling forward into the street, so far out did it lean and so frail did its lower timbers appear.

Entering the door, Ferrett led the way up the narrow, creaking stairs, that trembled and shook beneath their feet, up a second flight, even more rickety, and along which a rope, stretched from top to bottom formed the sole hand-rail, up a third flight and a fourth and a fifth, the atmosphere growing more heavy and impure, with each successive stage, as all the odors from below rose and mingled in one mass of smells.

The halls were narrow, dark and foul, and it seemed scarce credible that human beings could exist in such a place, but that they did exist, and in numbers, was proven by the open doors through which could be seen the crowded rooms inside.

At length when they had reached the top floor, nothing being over their heads but the timbers and beams and shingles that composed the roof, Ferrett went to the rear of the hall and knocked on a crazy, shattered door that hung by one hinge, when a croaking voice answered him, and, pushing the door carefully open, he entered, followed by Beatrice.

For a few moments they were unable to distinguish a single object in the room, so gloomy and tomb-like was it, there being but one narrow window set in the roof, and that—tightly closed, notwithstanding the warmth of the day and the bright, pleasant sunlight outside—was so grimy and dirty that it scarce permitted a few dim rays of light to filter through.

The room was close beyond description and it was only with difficulty that the girl could breathe, while the noisome air made her feel sick and faint.

When her eyes had become a little accustomed to the darkness of the room Beatrice was able to distinguish the various articles scattered about and to form a general idea of the appearance of the wretched den.

A low cot stood in one corner, shoved far under the eaves of the roof where they slanted nearly to the floor, as if the occupant feared publicity and had slunk as far into the recesses of his room as he could.

She could not distinguish the features of the occupant of the cot, but could see that some one occupied it, who was covered to the chin by a ragged spread drawn tightly about him.

A stool, a broken-backed chair, a rickety table completed the furniture of the apartment while it was evident from the absence of any clothes hanging on the walls, or shoes scattered about the floor that the lodger had

gone to bed completely dressed, even his cap being drawn down over his eyes.

Walking up to him, Ferrett spoke to him. "Buzzard," said he, "I have brought Miss Waters here to see you."

"Too late! too late! you promised to come last night and now it is too late!"

"But I could not come; I was attacked, knocked down and robbed by thieves and then thrown into a sewer, swept into the bay, and then rescued by Miss Beatrice."

"Miss Beatrice! I remember that name well enough, but her father used to call her 'Little Trixie,' his 'Little Trixie,' I know, I know."

"Then you knew my father?" asked Beatrice, who had stolen to the bedside at a signal from Ferrett.

And as the sweet young voice fell on his ears the old man started and cried:

"That is Miss Trixie's voice, I would know it among a thousand!"

"So you have come to see me, at last, and what do you want with Old Buzzard?"

"You can tell me something about that night on which my father died, can you not?"

"Yes; but I must tell it to you alone, and you must promise me that no one shall learn it from you until I no longer live, for I dare not tell you under any other conditions than those."

"I will promise."

"Then you leave the room, sir, and go to the floor below."

"You wish it?" whispered Ferrett, to Beatrice, who stood alongside of him.

"Yes, yes, go!" she replied, quickly, "there can be no danger from this bed-ridden old man, and you will be within call."

"Then, I will go; remember, Buzzard, you are to tell the truth, or—"

"Yes, yes, the truth, I'll tell the truth, but go, you go, you go!"

And he half-raised himself from his pillow, trembling with excitement, pointing to the door, so Ferrett, without any further hesitation went out, leaving Beatrice alone with Old Buzzard.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A VISITOR.

IN total darkness as she was, the hours dragged on for Gia' with laggard feet, and she lay in a half-stupor not knowing what was happening about her, and in that dazed state of mind that she cared but little.

But soon she arose from her recumbent position and looked about her, for the atmosphere of the room, which had before been cool and comfortable, now began to grow warmer and heavy, as if the register of a furnace had been opened and a stream of hot air poured into the cell.

But, although she felt all over the floor she could discover no opening through which this air could come, and thinking that the register might be placed in the wall she began to search the sides of the room, but, as her finger-tips encountered the smooth surface, she uttered a cry and shrunk hastily back.

The smooth walls were of iron and were now heated to a degree that rendered a mere touch on their surface a matter of danger, while the heat they threw out was almost unbearable!

Crouching in the center of the room, Gia' uttered not a sound after her last cry, and waited for what the fiendish cruelty of her jailers might suggest next.

And soon, in spots, the iron began to glow faintly and before her startled and staring eyes danced horrid and grotesque shapes that fascinated her as the basilisk eye of the serpent charms the bird, while she trembled with fear at the thought that her mind was giving way and that it was her disordered imagination that conjured up these awful specters and dancing images.

Glowing in a pale, unearthly light, they appeared and disappeared wavery and indistinct at one moment, steady and salient at the next, they advanced and retreated, flickered and grew pale and went out, started into sudden being and glared at her with open-eyed wonder, it seemed, while a charnel house odor and a graveyard smell burdened the air and added to the horror of her surroundings, while all the time the heat poured down and upon her from all sides, until it seemed as if her brain would burst

and her blood boil from the burning furnace.

This infernal torture continued for some time, the figures finally dying away altogether while the heat gradually disappeared, leaving Gia' entirely prostrated and with her mind slightly unbalanced by the ordeal through which she had passed.

When the air in the cell had reached a moderate degree of coolness, the door was suddenly opened and Mrs. Strake reappeared, carrying a heavy strap, one end of which was fastened to a leather bracelet fastened about her right wrist.

She seized the weak, trembling girl, and allowing no words half-carried, half-dragged her back into the cell into which she had first been thrust, and, despite her cries and moans, lashed her to the wall under the trap in the ceiling, and then, without a moment's warning, pulled the rope that was attached to the water-tank and poured a second torrent of the icy water over her shrinking form, while the poor child entreated, wept and implored in vain for mercy.

But the heart of the jaileress was as hard as the stone walls of the cell—as cold as the icy flood that dashed down from above, and she paid no more attention to the petition of the girl than she did to the rushing of the water.

Gia's blood had been heated to almost the boiling point a few moments before and now, on that account, the shock was doubly severe; yet no consideration of that sort prevented Mrs. Strake from proceeding about her diabolical work as methodically as if she had been trying her experiments on a piece of wood or inanimate marble, and it was easy to see what her object was.

She well knew, from long practice, that it was but a question of time when physical strength was exhausted, that the mental qualities would succumb, and that a weakened body rendered the mind much more subject to disease, and it was for this reason that she was inflicting these sudden and dangerous shocks on poor Gia', being careful, however, not to go too far, and watching to see that the bath was not prolonged too much, pulling the string and checking the flow of the water, occasionally, whenever Gia' showed unusual signs of exhaustion.

At length she stopped the water entirely, and then saying to the girl:

"I'm afraid your circulation has been checked, and will try and restore it."

She raised the strap she carried, and inflicted a dozen or twenty cutting, cruel blows across the poor child's thinly clad shoulders, while she, powerless to resist, quivered with pain and shame, yet clinched her teeth tightly, and uttered never a protest.

When Mrs. Strake had "sufficiently restored the circulation," as she expressed it, she released the girl, led her back to the other cell, and flinging her a dry wrap, left the room.

Wild with terror, pain and anguish, Gia' flung herself on the miserable pallet that occupied one side of the cell, and covering her face with her hands, burst into a torrent of weeping, sobbing aloud, and praying to Heaven to end her misery by death, and then completely exhausted she sobbed herself into a disturbed sleep, from which she was soon awakened by a noise at the door, when she started up in terror, fearful that her jailers were returning to inflict some new torture upon her.

But the door was opened; a voice that she did not recognize, said to some one outside:

"Here, get in there until to-morrow, and then we will see about locating you."

And some one was pushed into the cell, the door was closed and locked, and Gia' could hear by the sound of steady breathing, that she was no longer alone.

And at that moment a match flashed out in the darkness; a small wax candle was lighted, and by its rays Gia' saw, standing before her, a blonde angel who smiled upon her as if she were a messenger from heaven, sent to bear tidings of quick release to the poor prisoner.

And falling on her knees the young Italian girl, clasping her hands, cried:

"Save, oh, save me from this living death—this awful torture!"

But the other, whispering only one word: "Silence!" laid her finger on her lip, shock her head in sign of caution, and then extinguished the candle, leaving them again in total darkness.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BUZZARD'S STORY.

"SHUT the door tight, Miss Beatrice," directed Old Buzzard, when Ferrett had left the room, "and slide the bolt so that no one can come in and interrupt us."

And as Beatrice hesitated, he added:

"You certainly have nothing to fear from a sick man, who is here alone, and your friend is within call if you need him."

She hesitated no longer, realizing how foolish were her fears, but bolted the door, and then returning to the bedside, seated herself, and waited for him to begin.

A sudden fit of coughing had seized him, and the paroxysm lasting for some minutes, she at length asked if she could do anything for him.

"Nothing," he replied, gasping and struggling for breath as he spoke; "sit still, I will be better in a few moments."

At length he recovered himself and began:

"You do not recognize me, Miss Beatrice, and have not the remotest idea who I am, and I do not intend to disclose my identity to you until I have finished; then if you wish to know my name it will be time enough to tell it to you."

"Never mind the name," cried the girl, "only hasten to tell me what you know of the night on which my father died."

"I will tell you all I know, for I am rapidly sinking into the grave and want to leave you with a full and complete knowledge of the truth."

"But first you must promise me that you will never reveal to any living person what I am about to tell you; at least not during my life."

"Will you swear this to me?"

"I will."

"I believe you, and before you leave the room I will ask you to take that oath; but now I must tell you what I know."

"Nerve yourself, Miss Beatrice, for a great shock!"

"At the time of your father's death there were rumors floating about that he had been murdered—you had faith in these rumors, without doubt."

"I had, and have."

"You believe that Mr. Waters died by the hand of an assassin?"

"I do, firmly."

"You are mistaken!"

"I am?"

"Yes."

"You know that—"

"I know that he was not murdered."

"And you know—"

"That he committed suicide!"

"It is false!"

"It is true!"

"And how do you know this?"

"I saw him stab himself!"

"You saw—Great Heavens, is it possible that I have so long deceived myself, and that this shame is added to my life?"

"Your father killed himself and I was an eye-witness of the deed!"

"But how came you to be in the room?"

"That is what I am about to explain and this explanation will show you why I wish you to swear never to reveal my secret to any one while I am alive."

"I was in your father's employ—in what capacity I will tell you later, and on the night in question I was in the house and was suffering the greatest trouble of my life."

"It is not necessary for me to go into particulars, but I will say that it was imperatively necessary that I should secure possession of quite a sum of money and at once, or I ran the danger of being arrested within the next twenty-four hours."

"What to do I did not know, for I did not dare ask Mr. Waters for the amount as I was already under heavy obligations to him, and was fairly at my wits' ends, when, on going up-stairs that evening to his room, my foot slipped as I passed by the full-length portrait that hung in the hall, and putting out my hand to save myself from falling I grasped the frame and tore it from its lower fastening, it being hung by hinges at the top."

"Never having noticed this before, I assured myself that there was no one near and, completing my investigations, I found that there was a small alcove or niche back of the picture, and that through it any one could easily enter Mr. Waters's room."

Here a second fit of coughing interrupted the speaker, and Beatrice waited as patiently as she could until he resumed, a dim and as yet undefined suspicion beginning to form itself in her mind and rendering her doubly attentive to the sick man.

In a short time he continued:

"Like a flash I saw here the means of getting what I wanted, for I knew that Mr. Waters carried a large sum—for me—in his pocket, and that I could secrete myself in here, wait until he slept and then, creeping under the bed, obtain what I so greatly needed and escape without any risk of detection."

"I swung the picture back into its place and again went down-stairs and waited until the household had retired, until all was quiet, when I stole up-stairs, swung the picture cautiously out, stepped carefully into the niche, allowing the frame to swing silently back into its place, and then stood perfectly quiet, listening."

"And as I stood there a needle-like ray of light, streaming through the head-board attracted my attention, and applying my eye to the tiny aperture, I found that I could see the greater part of the room."

"The gas was burning brightly, and Mr. Waters was seated at a small desk, busily engaged in examining a number of documents that were spread before him, and in which he seemed deeply interested, so that I knew that I probably had a long time to wait."

"And so it proved, the little clock ticking away until it finally chimed out the hour of three, when Mr. Waters, gathering up his papers, locked them in his desk and undressing himself, retired to his bed, his head being but a few inches below my eyes."

"He had turned the gas partially down, and lay there, muttering to himself, tumbling and tossing and groaning, until finally he leaped from his recumbent position, hurried to the desk where lay something I could not see and which he grasped, and then hastening back he threw himself down, cried:

"Better death than dishonor!"

"And before I could realize what he was about to do, or call out to restrain him, had I known what was to follow, I saw the flash of a steel blade as it was raised high up, heard a dull thud, a deep groan, and then all became silent."

"Trembling with fear I did not dare do as I had intended, for some moments, and then as I realized how imperative it was that I should obtain the sum I needed I crawled under the bed, reached the chair in which hung his coat, secured the money that I wanted, carefully replacing the pocketbook, and then left the room as I had entered, without daring to even look at the bed."

"Of course I was not suspected, as I had replaced the picture and retired unobserved, and, of course, I did not offer my testimony, as I had robbed the dead, and as the doors were locked and no access to the room appeared possible there could be but one explanation of the manner in which he had met his death, and that was given by the verdict returned by the coroner's jury—Suicide!"

Apparently exhausted by this long recital, Old Buzzard fell back, while Beatrice sobbed silently, the suspicion he was going to confirm her fears now being a reality and leaving no doubt that her father had died by his own hand to escape disgrace."

But in a few moments she arose, and saying as she tried to calm herself:

"I will return soon."

She left the room, feeling that she must have a breath of fresh air or faint, and stepped out into the hall, where much to her surprise she could see nothing of Ferrett.

She was about to call him, when suddenly a rude hand was placed over her mouth, she was violently seized and dragged into an adjoining room and the door locked behind her before she had any opportunity of seeing who her assailant or assailants were."

And as she looked about her she saw that she was in a veritable prison, for there was but one window and that, small and placed immediately under the eaves, was not more

than six inches square, while the door was solid and massive and defied any efforts she might make to open it.

So, seating herself, she waited as calmly as she could under the circumstances for whatever might happen.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A MEETING.

For some time she remained undisturbed and then the door was suddenly flung open, and three men entered the room, two of whom she recognized—they were Vane and Mervyn Temple.

The third was a vulture-like looking personage, with hooked nose and claw-like fingers that ever seemed to be working as if to clutch and grasp something that was just out of his reach.

Closing the door after them, they ranged themselves in front of Beatrice, when Vane Temple spoke to the stranger:

"This is my ward, doctor," said he, "and I am sorry to say that I can do nothing with her."

"She gives way to the most violent paroxysms of rage, and also labors under the delusion that she has been defrauded by my son and by me."

"A very common form of mania, Mr. Temple, particularly where one has been in better circumstances, and has lost all."

"Has the young lady been long afflicted?"

"Nearly, if not quite, two years."

"Sad, sad, very sad! But, as she has youth and what seems to be an excellent constitution, I see no reason why she should not soon be entirely restored to her right mind."

Beatrice, instantly comprehending that this little comedy was entirely for her benefit, and that it would result in her being forcibly carried away and imprisoned in the private asylum, said nothing, but sat there like a statue, sneering in her quiet smile with a bitterness that was decidedly unpleasant for the two Temples to witness, so utterly contemptuous was it.

But at last, when the so-called doctor approached her to feel her pulse, to look in her eye and to examine her general health, she revolted, and springing to her feet, cried:

"Do not dare touch me!"

"I will submit, quietly, and go wherever you wish to take me, but you shall not touch me!"

"Calmly, now, calmly, young lady!" interposed the "doctor" in his softest, silkiest voice:

"No one wishes to offer you any indignity and I assure you that under my care you will be as safe and happy as if sheltered by your own roof, in your own home."

"A few short months of seclusion, a few weeks of perfect rest, and I have no doubt that we can restore you to that circle you are so calculated to adorn, completely rested in mind and in perfect health."

"Cease your useless platitudes, sir, they may be of a character to deceive unsuspecting people; but I know you for what you are."

"I know that you are the keeper of a private mad-house, and that you intend to imprison me there just so long as these gentlemen may direct."

"They, as well as you, know that I am as sane as you are, yet it is for their own purposes that they thus attack an innocent, helpless, friendless girl."

"But as I intend to offer no resistance, so do you offer no violence, or—"

"Enough of this," cried Vane Temple, harshly.

"Doctor, do not listen to any more of this young lady's vaporings, but take her away to your retreat, where, if she wants to talk irrationally she can find others of a weak mind to converse with."

"Then," said the physician, changing his tone abruptly, and seizing the girl roughly by the arm, dropping his polished manner and silky tone suddenly, "come along, my young lady, and do not let us have any more words!"

But at his touch the girl shrunk back as far as she could and called out for help, all of her coolness giving place to disgust and repugnance as his clutching fingers fell on her arm.

And in instant response to her appeal the door was flung violently open and Ferrett,

blazing with wrath and indignation, bounded into the room, leaped to her side, and wrenching the physician's hand away with a grip about the wrist that made the bones fairly crack, hurled him against the opposite wall and placed himself in front of Beatrice, defying her tormentors.

For a moment the quartette stood thus, glaring at each other, while, as if by magic, a revolver flashed out from each of his side-pockets. Ferrett cocked and pointed them, the two Temples, father and son, slunk back and still further back until they were stopped by the wall, where they stood, shrinking, cowering and trembling.

"You curs!" thundered Ferrett, his voice quivering with indignation, "you cowards! thus to attack a weak, defenseless woman, whose very sex should be a shield against such insults even from you."

"Shame on you! Double shame!"

"It would be only just and merited punishment if I should kill you where you stand, but I prefer to leave you to the fate that I can plainly see stealing upon you, slowly, it is true, but none the less relentless and certain."

"When—"

A crash, and Ferrett dropped helpless to the floor, while one of his pistols was discharged as he fell, the ball, however, burying itself harmlessly in the ceiling and inflicting no injury on any one.

A trap in the roof overhead had been silently opened and a man, dropping down from above had so completely surprised Ferrett by the suddenness of his attack that the detective had no opportunity to defend himself, and lay powerless in the hands of the four men, for the physician and the two Temples had thrown themselves upon him the instant he had fallen, and now held him securely.

And then he was quickly disarmed, Vane and Mervyn Temple and the physician seized Beatrice and while the new-comer covered Ferrett with his own weapons and backed slowly out of the room, the girl was forced into the hall and down stairs, the door was slammed and the detective left a prisoner.

Beatrice, realizing that all resistance was useless, submitted quietly, entered the closed carriage that stood in the street and was followed by the doctor, while his assistant seated himself opposite her, the father and son bowed with mock politeness, and the carriage dashed away, and after a long drive, drew up at the asylum, when Beatrice was committed to an attendant by Girardi, who first asked where Mrs. Strake was.

"She has gone out, sir," replied the man.

"Then put this young lady in Number 9—or, no, that is occupied by—put her in Number 11."

"Yes, sir."

And following him, Beatrice was taken up-stairs, ushered into a long corridor, and there left a moment, while the attendant went in search of the keys.

A candlestick, forgotten by some one, and a box of matches stood near her, and quickly taking the candle she hid it in her pocket and then quickly secured a few matches just as the guard returned, and again following him, he opened a door, pushed her into a cell, and saying:

"Here, get in there until to-morrow, and then we will see about locating you," slammed the door behind her and locked it, leaving her standing there.

And then she took out her piece of candle and, striking a match lighted it, when, much to her surprise, she saw a wan, haggard face looking up at her, and realizing that by some mistake she had been placed in a cell that was already occupied, and as the occupant rose and addressed her, she whispered: "Silence," and then extinguished the light.

And a sudden wild hope flashing through her mind, she bent forward and whispered:

"Are you 'Cynthy'?"

When her companion, startled at the sound of that long-unheard name, cried:

"Yes, yes, I am 'Cynthy'!"

And then sunk, fainting, to the floor.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A THREAT.

BEATRICE, rejoiced beyond measure that she had thus accidentally been thrown into

communication with the girl she wished to save from this living tomb, busied herself with endeavoring to restore the fainting child—for child she was in years—finally being successful.

When she had regained consciousness, and recalled the manner of Beatrice's arrival, she seized the hands of the girl, and covering them with kisses, whispered:

"You arrived just in time to save me from going mad; but, tell me, who are you and how do you come here?"

"Be patient, and you will learn all, but not now. This mistake will soon be discovered, and we will, I fear, be separated; but, before that happens we will make a bold stroke for liberty, and try to escape."

"But tell me one thing: do you know Mr. and Mrs. Parker?"

"Yes."

"And they are well?"

"Perfectly."

"And do they sometimes think of me?"

"Your name is constantly on their lips."

"And they do not think harshly of 'Cynthy,' as they always called me?"

"No; on the contrary, they overflow with love and affection for you."

"Thank Heaven for that!"

"And now, Gia', do you feel strong enough to attempt to escape?"

"Since your coming has given me renewed hope, I feel strong enough to do anything."

"Then we will try and leave this place to-night. Listen: I have here two small revolvers that are fully loaded, and when the attendant comes I shall spring upon him, or on her, whichever it is, and force our way out."

"We must lay our plans according to what happens. Only be brave, be courageous, and we will escape from this place, regain our freedom, and you will be restored to your friends, and can then revenge yourself on the man who has so cruelly deceived you."

"You know that?"

"I do."

"And you know the man who married me under a false name, and then tiring of me, tried to get rid of me by placing me in this place, pretending that I was insane?"

"The same man was instrumental in sending me here."

"Then he is our common enemy!"

"Yes, and even more mine than yours."

"How can that be?"

"He was instrumental in driving my father to suicide, and has, I believe, with his father to aid him, robbed me of what was my fortune, robbing my brother at the same time."

"Your father committed suicide?"

"Yes, it is now proven to me beyond the possibility of a doubt that he was driven to it."

"I thought until to-day that he had been murdered; but stricken by remorse, and in the presence of rapidly approaching death, an eye-witness to my father's death told me of it."

"Will you tell me of all this?"

"Yes, it will serve to distract your mind from your surroundings, and pass the time away until our jailer comes."

And then beginning at the time two years before, when she had overheard the conversation in the library, Beatrice told Gia' the whole story, winding up by repeating to her what she had heard from Old Buzzard during that afternoon.

"So there seems to be no doubt that, driven to desperation by the plots against him, and seeing no way by which he could escape disgrace and calumny, Mr. Waters was forced into taking his own life," said Gia', as Beatrice completed her sad story.

"No doubt, indeed, I fear," sighed the girl.

"And yet—"

"You have omitted something?"

"Yes, a friend—Mr. Ferrett, the detective—who examined the room and the body, was confident that he had found a clew that pointed to the commission of a murder."

"A clew?"

"Yes."

"And what was that?"

"He found a slight scratch on the little finger of my father's hand, and unclenching the stiffened fingers, discovered, in the hand,

a rose-twigg through which was thrust a bent pin."

"And this?"

This, he felt positive, had been torn from the lapel of the murderer's coat, the latter having probably worn a button-hole bouquet, fastened with the bent pin, on that evening: at least that was Mr. Ferrett's theory."

"And in clutching at his assailant, he had torn the rose from his coat, bending the pin as he grasped it?"

"No, the pin had evidently been bent before the rose was fastened in the coat, seemingly having been crushed between some one's teeth."

The Italian girl began to tremble violently and asked in a hoarse whisper:

"And have you this tell-tale piece of wire?"

"Yes, I carry it with me always."

"And will you let me see it?"

"Certainly, there can be but very little danger in lighting a match."

And taking a small velvet-lined case from her pocket, Beatrice opened it and, lighting a match, showed Gia' the bent pin lying on the black velvet.

"Great heavens!" cried the girl, in a hoarse, unnatural voice, "it is—"

"Hush!" whispered Beatrice, closing the case and putting it in her pocket and blowing out the match. "There is some one at the door!"

And, rising silently, she hurried to the side of the room, where she drew back close against the wall, so that any one entering could not see her at first, on account of the swinging door, and holding one of her pistols in her hand she waited.

The door, being unlocked, swung open and the rays of a lamp penetrated the cell, and, as Mrs. Strake entered, and saw Gia' lying on the floor, she cried, not being aware that Beatrice had been placed in the same cell by the other attendant:

"Come, come, it's time for another bath!" and walking up to the prostrate girl, she stirred her roughly with her foot.

But, at the same moment, she heard a step beside her, and, as she turned, a pistol was thrust into her face and a stern voice whispered:

"Utter one sound and I fire!"

CHAPTER XL.

SAVED!

To say that Mrs. Strake was astonished would be putting it mildly, while to state that she was indignant would but feebly express her condition.

Yet in addition to this she was perfectly helpless and completely at the mercy of Beatrice, whose determined look was proof sufficient that she would not hesitate an instant in carrying out her threat should any resistance be offered.

Gia', who had lain so quietly that Mrs. Strake, as she entered, had suspected nothing, now leaped to her feet and seconded Beatrice's threat by drawing and leveling the weapon the girl had handed her, and thus hemmed in and between two fires, Mrs. Strake wilted, mentally and physically, and would undoubtedly have dropped the lamp she carried had not Beatrice taken it from her and set it on the floor.

And then the jailress was gagged in a jiffy and her hands were tied behind her in a most scientific manner by the Italian girl, the strap she carried at her waist and with which she "restored the circulation," being used for this purpose.

And then she was fastened to a ring let into the wall, and lay there, unable to escape, unable to call for assistance, as completely in the power of her prisoners, as they had been in hers, a short time previous.

And then Beatrice consulted the tiny watch that hung at her belt:

"Ten o'clock!" she cried, much surprised at the lateness of the hour. "The time has passed more rapidly than I supposed, and we will not have much longer to wait."

"To wait? For what?" asked Gia'.

"Until it is late enough for us to venture out without danger of encountering all of the attendants."

"They will not, in all probability, be stirring after midnight."

"But they might come here in search of that woman, and thus learn what has happened to her."

"True, and to avoid that danger we will lock her in here and then go to Number 9, the cell the doctor first mentioned, and in which he thought you were confined, and wait there until all danger is passed."

So after looking out into the corridor cautiously, and finding that it was deserted, Beatrice led the way to the second door below, after carefully locking the cell they had just left, and removing the keys, opened it and entered No. 9.

She had brought the lamp with her, and placing it on the floor, she took a careful survey of the room.

It was the room in which Gia' had suffered such unspeakable tortures from the chilling bath, and she shuddered again as she related her experience to Beatrice, who could scarce contain her indignation on listening to it; but suddenly a thought struck her, and telling Gia' to wait for her she went back to where Mrs. Strake was lying, and without any ceremony took possession of her shawl and huge sun-bonnet, which she still wore, having evidently just returned from some excursion outside.

With these she came back to Gia', and throwing the shawl about her shoulders and putting the bonnet on her head, no one, in a dim light, without peering into her face, would have suspected that she was any other than Mrs. Strake.

"Now, Gia', wait here until I return," she whispered, as she prepared to leave the room.

"You will not desert me!"

"You need not fear that; I am only going on an exploring tour and will soon be back, when we will make a final effort to escape."

And she went out, leaving Gia' alone and nervous lest something might occur to destroy their plans, yet determined to resist to the utmost any attempt to recapture her.

Beatrice followed on down the corridor, carrying her keys, until she came to a large grated door at the end, which she opened without difficulty, and then proceeded on down-stairs, where she nearly stumbled over a tall, lanky fifteen-year-old girl, who was sound asleep there.

As Beatrice's foot accidentally struck her, she awoke, yawned vigorously, and said:

"Oh, auntie, I was gettin' so sleepy."

"Please can't you take me home now?"

Here was an unexpected piece of good fortune, for the girl evidently mistook Beatrice for her aunt, Mrs. Strake, and if Gia' were dressed in her clothes!—

"Don't you want to go up and see the crazy folks a minute before you go?" asked Beatrice in a gruff whisper.

"Oh, yes, auntie, if they won't hurt me," replied the girl, curiosity overcoming her fear.

"Then come along!" and Beatrice, retracing her steps soon reached Number 9 again, and opening the door, led the girl inside, closed the door behind her and then, clapping her hand on the child's shoulder, said:

"Keep perfectly quiet now, or—"

And a menacing gesture conveyed the remainder of the phrase more emphatically than any words could have done.

"There, 'Cynthia,'" she cried, highly elated at the success of her plan.

"There is a disguise all ready for you, hurry and put it on."

And then turning to the girl again she said as sternly as she could:

"Take off your dress and hat!"

The poor child was as much frightened as astonished, and trembled so that she could not use her hands, so Beatrice performed the office of waiting-maid for her and quickly removed her outer garments, put on her the gown Gia' had worn, and then, taking her to Number 11, left her there with her aunt, uttering some dire threat that was to be fulfilled in case she made any outcry, and consoling herself with the thought that the attendants were too accustomed to noise to pay any attention to her even if she called for help, while the double doors would drown her cries.

And then taking Gia' by the hand, the latter having put on her "niece's" dress, hat and shoes, she led her down-stairs, out of the front door to the gate, opened the latter with a small key which she found in the bunch, stepped out into the road and met Dr. Girardi, who was just entering, face to face.

"Oh, Mrs. Strake," said the latter, pleasantly, "just taking your niece home?"

"Hurry back, please, as I have a new patient who will need your attention."

And stepping aside he was about to let them pass, when the wind, which was blowing freshly, caught the huge bonnet Beatrice wore, and it being loosely tied, fell back on her shoulders, exposing her face.

"What!" cried the doctor, "an escape?"

And he tried to grasp her when Gia', thrusting her pistol in his face, caused him to desist and to stagger back in terror, when the two girls, fear lending them wings, darted up the road at full speed, and soon came in sight of the shed.

But Girardi had by this time recovered from his fright, and came running after them, calling at the top of his voice, and rapidly overtaking them; but as they neared the shed a carriage issued from under it, drawn by two horses, and a man came running toward them.

"Jump into the carriage, miss!" he cried, as he came up; "I will attend to this man!"

And as he leaped into the open door they heard a crash, and looking back saw the doctor knocked clean off his feet by a crushing blow delivered straight from the shoulder.

In an instant their rescuer had returned, had slammed the door and leaped to his seat beside the driver, when the whip was applied and the horses dashed off at full gallop, and the two girls, throwing themselves into each other's arms, burst into tears of joy and nervous excitement.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOME AGAIN.

THE carriage dashed rapidly on, the horses being urged to the top of their speed until some distance lay between them and the asylum, when gradually the team was brought down to a quick trot, and Beatrice, leaning out of the window, called to the driver and asked where he was going to take them.

The man who had come to their rescue then spoke a word to the coachman, and, the horses being stopped, he jumped to the ground, and approaching the maiden, removed his cap, said:

"If Miss Waters will allow me to get inside, I can explain to her without having to stop."

"Certainly," replied the girl, and when the man had seated himself and the carriage once more rolled on, she continued:

"Where are we to be driven?"

"Mr. Ferrett instructed me to drive you to Mrs. Morton, and then, disguised as Miss Reade, to go to Westview Cottage and see Miss Rivers, making some excuse for having been absent and remaining there to await further instructions which he will give you to-morrow."

"When did you see Mr. Ferrett last?"

"Two days ago."

"Do you know where a man called 'Buzzard' lives?"

"Very well."

"Then when we have left Mrs. Morton, here, at Mrs. Morton's, you will instantly drive me to 'Buzzard's' home."

"But, Miss Waters—"

"Wait and I will explain."

"Excuse me, certainly."

"Mr. Ferrett is now—unless he has succeeded in escaping, which I think doubtful—a prisoner in that building."

"In—"

"In the building where 'Buzzard' lives."

"How can that be?"

In a few words as possible Beatrice informed him of what had happened that afternoon when Ferrett had been overpowered, adding:

"I do not see how he could escape, unless he could reach the trap-door in the roof and even then he could not reach the ground."

"No, and as he is a philosophical gentleman we will probably find him asleep, waiting for something to turn up."

"He might, however, have succeeded in making enough noise on the door to have attracted some one's attention, who would free him."

"Not in that house, Miss Waters; it is a regular thieves' den, and none of the inmates pay the slightest attention to what is going on in the other rooms, even though some one were being murdered."

"Then we will probably find Mr. Ferrett in that room."

"Without much doubt, and I think that I had better go and see about him, immediately."

"But of course I will go with you."

"Do you think that necessary?"

"Not absolutely necessary, perhaps, but I prefer to go."

"Just as you wish, Miss Waters, but here we are," as the carriage drew up in front of Mrs. Morton's.

There was a light in the window where Mrs. Morton usually sat, and Beatrice, getting out of the carriage, followed by Gia', went to the area door and rung the bell.

In a moment the door was opened and Mrs. Morton, who had evidently been dozing and was not in the best of humors, cried:

"Well, what do you want?"

"Why, Mrs. Morton, don't you know me?" cried Beatrice, throwing back her bonnet and exposing her face.

"Miss Trixie!" cried Mrs. Morton, dumfounded; "why, child, what does this mean an' who's this youngster you have with you?"

"A poor, motherless child, Mrs. Morton, who has suffered even more than I have and by the same hands."

"Pore child! pore child!" said the kind-hearted old lady, bending forward and kissing Gia's pale cheek, "come right in an' set down, you look completely worn out."

"Take good care of her, Mrs. Morton, put her in my room and remain with her until I return; I will not be gone long."

"And must you go, Miss Waters?" pleaded Gia', sorry to see her protector leave her.

"Yes, dear, but do not call me anything but Beatrice; all my friends call me that and I am sure that you are one of them."

"Indeed, indeed I am; but do hurry back, or better, take me with you!"

"No, you had better remain here and rest, Gia' dear, for what you have undergone is enough to make a stronger person than you dangerously ill."

"Well then, I will do as you say."

"Mrs. Morton will take good care of you."

"Good-by!"

And hurrying out she entered the carriage again and was rapidly driven away, the man sent by Ferrett and who had so opportunely come to her rescue taking his former seat by the driver.

It was a long drive to "Buzzard's" home and Beatrice had ample time to think over what had happened, and, as she recalled the incidents of the evening, she suddenly remembered Gia's exclamation when she had mentioned the bent pin at the moment when Mrs. Strake had opened the door.

"What could she have known about it, or suspected, I wonder?" she murmured, to herself.

"Surely it is not possible that I have met a person who can unravel this mystery; but did not Mr. Parker say that Gia' had once been a flower-girl, and if she was is it not possible that she might—"

"Heavens, could it be! but, no, the idea is madness!"

And as she was about to call out to the driver to stop and to turn back that she might question Gia' about this matter, she recollected herself and seated herself once more, while the carriage, after rattling through a narrow street for some time, finally stopped in front of a house which she recognized as being the one she had visited the day before.

And her conductor, opening the door, assisted her to alight, and then led the way into the house and up the dark stairs.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A LIE EXPOSED.

No light glimmered in that dungeon-like gloom, and it was so very dark that they had to grope their way cautiously along, feeling for each step in turn.

At length, as they reached the top floor, counting by the number of flights that they had ascended, the detective, stopping, produced from some unknown receptacle a dark lantern, which he quickly lighted, closing the slide so that but a single ray stole from the crevice, and then motioning to Beatrice to point out the door, she was about to step forward and try the handle, when a slight

noise, proceeding from the direction of Buzzard's room, attracted their attention.

Instantly closing his lantern completely, as the sound broke the tomb-like silence, the detective grasped the girl by the arm, and standing in his tracks, waited.

In a moment more the sound that had startled them was repeated with greater distinctness, and they heard some one cry, as if excited and angry:

"No, you ask too much!"

"Ef yer think so," returned another voice, "then git outen here. I'll go to ther girl, an' see ef she won't give me more nor you to larn w'ot I knows!"

"Come, Buzzard, come!" expostulated a voice that Beatrice recognized, "you have not done so *very* much that you should be so exorbitant in your demands."

"And another thing," added a second familiar voice, "as far as seeing the girl is concerned that is not in your power; she is safe under lock and key, and if you go out there and cause any trouble, I will see that you are placed in safety also."

"Yer will, hey! Then blow me ef I don't give ther yell an' bring ther boys on yer, an' aettle this thing right here."

"Now don't get excited, Buzzard," continued the first speaker.

"We want to do the square thing by you, but it does seem to me that you are a little exorbitant in your demands."

"A thousand dollars for lending us your room for a time! It is too much, decidedly."

"Yes, it air steep fer a couple o' hours' rent fer a room like this, but—"

"But what?" asked the other, as the other hesitated.

"But there is other things ter be taken in consideration."

"Well, let's see; what are the 'other things'?"

"In the fu'st place you comes to me an' you sez, sez you: 'Buzzard, I wants ter hire yer room fer a couple o' hours on sech an' sech a day, an' will pay yer han'sum' fer it."

"All right," sez I, "w'ot's yer figger?"

"A hundred," sez you.

"Done," sez I, actin' like a puffick gen'leman an' never askin' you w'ot yer wanted it fer."

"Then," sez you, 'skip out an' give us ther use of ther room,' an' out I skips, but w'en I comes back, late at night, w'ot does yer say?"

"That the party that I expected had failed to put in an appearance, and that I wanted your room for some time yet."

"An ag'in I agrees, like another puffick gen'leman; but as I war a leetle leary 'bout w'ot you wanted ter do, w'ot is my nex' move, hey? Tell me w'ot my nex' move war?"

"Why, I suppose that you went to the nearest rum-shop and proceeded to get drunk with the money I had advanced."

"Yer wrong, pard, dead wrong, fer I never left this yer mansion."

"Then you were down-stairs?"

"Wrong ag'in; I war right here, under this yere identical bed, a-listenin' ter every word w'ot war said!"

"Fire an' fury! Do you mean to say—"

"I mean ter say that I heerd every word o' ther talk between ther gal an' ther feller w'ot pertended ter be Ol' Buzzard."

"Then—"

"Hold hard, mister, yer won't gain nuthin' by drawin' yer weepin', fer w'en yer left I slipped outen this an' tole a side-pardner o' mine all about it, an' ef anything happens ter me he air a-goin' straight ter ther nearest perliceman an' air a-goin' ter give ther hull snap dead away."

"He's got us, Mervyn, and there is no use trying to compromise."

"But, father, he may be deceiving us; let us find out what he knows, and if he proves that what he claims is true, then there will be time enough to admit our defeat."

"That is true; and now, Buzzard, tell us what was said and what you learned."

"Thet's fair enuff, an' I'll drive on."

"Ther feller w'ot pertended to be me tole ther gurl that he hed seen her father kill himself, w'ile he was hid behind ther bed."

"That is enough; but what claim does this give you on us, and why should you demand an additional sum?"

"You asked no questions and did not

seem to care what use was made of your room and I do not see—"

"Then I'll tell yer."

"This man w'ot pertended to be me tole ther gurl that he had stole some money from ther ol' man, an' ef it so be thet I took thet boodle, then I must hev it."

"Oh, I see!"

"Thet air fort'nit," replied Buzzard sarcastically.

"You object to being saddled with that crime without receiving due compensation for it."

"Ther idee air k'reekt."

"Well, rather than have any difficulty about it we will pay you the additional sum, particularly as our scheme worked so satisfactorily and the girl is now convinced, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that her father killed himself."

"You are right, sir, and even in her ravings hereafter—for I've no doubt that she will soon begin to rave, Dr. Girardi will take care of that—she will not talk of anything but suicide."

"Then, Buzzard, I will pay you the thousand now, and hope you will be satisfied with that sum."

"Oh, yes, sir, an' much obleeged."

"Then here you are," and the two listeners heard the sound of crisp bank-notes being counted.

When that sound ceased Buzzard was silent a moment and then, as he finished counting the sum, he said, coolly:

"An' my pardner?"

"What do you mean?"

"I promised him that he sh'u'd hev a whack at yer pile."

"That he should be paid by us for services rendered to you?"

"Perzackly."

"But this is infamous; how much did you promise him?"

"Ther same thet I war ter git."

"What!"

"A thousand dollars—an' no counterfeits no 'queer,' yer understan'."

"But—"

"He air a cur'us sort of a cove, an' might ride rusty ef he didn't git a whack."

"He's got us again, father, and as we are in his power I guess we'll have to settle."

"I see no other way; but it is impossible to-night."

"Tell your friend to come to the house to-morrow evening and ask for a package for—say 'B. X.,' and he will get what he asks."

"W'y not see you?"

"I am going out of town in the morning and will not be back for several days, while my son will also be absent."

"No tricks!"

"You may be assured of that, for you well know that you have us in your power."

"Yes, thet's so."

"Then let him call about eight o'clock and I promise you that everything will be satisfactory both to him and to you."

"And now, Mervyn, let us be going," and as they rose, Beatrice and the detective who had heard every word, drew back into an empty room opposite Buzzard's, and hid themselves.

And in a moment more the two men stole out, felt their way cautiously along the wall until they reached the stairs, when they crept silently down and were heard no more.

And Buzzard closing his door after them, bolted it, when all became quiet, and the house sunk once more into complete silence.

Then, Beatrice and the detective, after waiting a few moments, to assure themselves that the visitors would not return, left their hiding-place, tip-toed cautiously across the hall to the room where Ferrett was supposed to be, tried the door, cautiously, finding it locked, much to their surprise, for they had hoped that Ferrett might have escaped, and then stood for a moment, consulting.

At length Beatrice's companion, opening his lantern, allowed a ray of light to fall on the lock, when he saw that it fastened with a spring catch, releasing which, he easily opened the door and stepped into the room, when he slid the lantern wide open and looked about.

But the room was vacant and no trace of

Ferrett was to be seen, while the girl and the detective, completely nonplused, stood gazing at each other in astonishment.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

THE detective, carefully closing the door, then turned to Beatrice, and as he again closely examined the room, he said:

"You are sure that this is the room where Mr. Ferrett was left when you were carried away, Miss Waters?"

"Perfectly sure."

"And the door was slammed after you went out?"

"Yes; I heard the door slam and the spring-lock catch as it snapped."

"Then some one must have released him, for, you see, he could not have escaped otherwise."

"There is no way by which he could have opened the door from this side, and—but can we get out, now that the door is shut?"

And, trying it, he found that it held fast, and as it closed from the inside, could not be burst open.

"What an egregious ass I am," he cried, as he realized that he had locked himself in; "but no matter; I will cut a hole through the wood, and thus be able to reach the lock."

And requesting her to hold the lantern, he drew a stout knife from his pocket and attacked the door vigorously; but it was made of solid oak, and after working a short time he desisted, turning to the girl and saying:

"It will take I know not how long to open this door, and I am not sure that I will be able to cut through it, for, you see, the whole face of the wood is studded with nails."

And such was the case, for the former occupant of the room had evidently been amusing himself by driving hundreds of nails into the door, forming all sorts of fantastic designs—stars, crosses, triangles, squares, circles, and other geometrical figures.

"You might as well abandon that idea," remarked Beatrice, after carefully examining the door, as it will not be possible, as you say, to cut through there with no other tools than a pocket-knife."

"Suppose we turn our attention to the trap-door, through which Mr. Ferrett's assailant dropped so suddenly."

"True; maybe Mr. Ferrett escaped through that opening."

But, on turning the light in that direction, they found that the door was placed so high above the floor that it was impossible to reach it, while there being not a single article of furniture in the room, there was nothing on which a person could stand and thus be able to reach up.

"No," confessed the detective, shaking his head, "he could not have gotten through there without outside assistance, and I do not believe that was rendered him."

"If you only had something to stand on," mused Beatrice, "you could easily crawl out, and probably enter some other trap, for it is possible that all of the rooms are provided with them for the purpose of ventilation."

"More likely to afford communication, by means of the roof, with the other rooms, other than by the hall; people who build tenement-houses are not so careful of the comfort of their tenants."

"Then you think that these were placed in here by the occupants of the building?"

"Undoubtedly."

"The place has always borne an unsavory reputation, and Old Buzzard, in there, is no better than the rest of the gang, who live here."

"Why not pound on the door and endeavor to attract his attention?"

"With what object?"

"Why, he will come and release us."

"Not he! If a murder were being committed in the next room to his, and the victim cried for help, I doubt if he would do anything more than grumble at his sleep being disturbed, turn over in bed, and begin to snore."

"Then we will have to depend on our own exertions if we wish to escape."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, we cannot remain here idle; let

me have the lantern, and I will examine every nook and corner of the room."

So, taking the light, Beatrice threw its rays hither and thither, her quick eye glancing in every direction, but without avail, until, as she walked about the room her foot encountered a loose plank in one corner, and she saw that the floor was uneven where she had stepped.

Stooping, she tried to lift the piece of board that had attracted her attention, but without avail, as it was firmly pressed down between the adjoining planks, so, turning to the detective, she requested him to aid her.

And then, taking his knife from his pocket, her companion, by inserting the blade in the crack and lifting gently, managed to raise the piece of flooring up, it being a foot or so in length and three or four inches in breadth, disclosing, as he did so, an open space between the rafters, the ceiling and laths of the room below forming the bottom.

And throwing the light into this receptacle, Beatrice uttered a cry of surprise, while her companion craned his neck eagerly forward to see what had startled her.

Extending her hand, the girl plunged it into the recess and drew out a short iron bar, and afterward a few files, a bunch of skeleton-keys and a dark-lantern, besides a small pair of slender pincers, all of which articles she laid on the floor.

"What does this mean?" she asked, turning to the detective.

"It means that you have discovered a small kit of burglars' tools, and that they were left here by some person who formerly occupied this room."

"I told you that there was an unsavory lot in this house, and here is the proof."

"And will these things not aid us in escaping from here?"

"Probably; I will try to force the door with this 'jimmy,' as the iron bar is called."

But these efforts proved in vain, for in the absence of anything in the shape of a hammer with which to force the end of the bar between the door and the frame, he found that he could not force it in far enough to give him any purchase on the wood.

So, after a dozen or more attempts, he ceased the effort, and added:

"We will have to devise some other means, for this will not do."

Beatrice's woman wit found, in a moment, another expedient, however, so going to the trap, which still remained open, she called the detective to her, handed him the lantern, and then took the bar from him, while he watched her proceedings with interest.

"If we only had a rope," she muttered, "we could throw this bar through the trap and let it catch outside, when— Ah, my shawl!"

And quickly taking off the wrap, she tore it into three strips, giving the ends to the detective to hold, and began to braid them rapidly, while he, comprehending her design, watched her flying fingers excitedly.

In a few moments the stout woollen strips were formed into a stout cord, long enough for their purpose, and, handing this to the detective, she requested him to fasten it firmly to the iron bar, which was rapidly and firmly done.

And then, Beatrice holding the loose end, he stood under the trap, and after one or two ineffectual efforts it caught and held fast across the opening, when he, without a word, seized the hanging braid and climbed hand over hand to the roof, seized the side of the trap and drew himself out on the roof, and then, turning and peering down, whispered:

"Can you hold on while I pull you up?"

And the girl nodding, he swung her through the trap, she aiding him with all of her strength, and holding the lantern under her arm, and then helped her on to the roof.

But as he did so, the tin gutter, in which he had placed his foot to brace himself, treacherously gave way, and he fell headlong to the ground below, jerking the braided shawl from her hands and nearly pulling her after him in his fall.

And an instant afterward a dull thud and a sickening crash came to her ears, and dizzy with terror she reeled and nearly fell after him, her hand clutching involuntarily the sill of the trap and alone saving her from a fearful death.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE UBIQUITOUS FERRETT.

It was a perilous position in which Beatrice now found herself placed, for she was perched high up above the earth on a steeply-slanting roof, in the middle of the night, and with no one near to help her.

And to add to the horror of her situation the recent terrible fall and death of her companion had so unnerved her that she trembled like a leaf and was sick and dizzy, so that she narrowly escaped pitching off the high roof and falling.

But gradually she grew cooler and more self-reliant and began to look about and take a survey of her surroundings, and to this end she opened the lantern and flooded the roof with the light that streamed from it.

Holding on to the edge of the trap through which she had escaped, she saw that it was placed high up toward the top of the roof, and that by climbing over the narrow opening she could reach the peak and worm herself along to another trap that lay some distance to her left, and which, being open, she supposed to be the one that led into Buzzard's room, and this one she determined to enter.

So, with a prayer for strength, she drew herself up cautiously to the peak, and then, crawling along the sharp edge where the shingles met and were capped with bent sheets of tin, she wormed her way slowly to a point above the open trap of Buzzard's room, and slipping cautiously down to the opening, inserted her feet, hung for an instant suspended, and then dropped to the floor below.

As she struck she quickly regained her balance, and turning the light full on the cot, whipped a revolver out of her pocket and thrust it in the face of the man who confronted her, performing all of these movements with such lightning-like rapidity that the startled occupant of the room was taken completely by surprise and did not pretend to offer the slightest resistance.

He was seated on the edge of the cot, completely dressed, and did not move when Beatrice thrust the revolver in his face, merely contenting himself with saying, in a voice that made the girl start back in surprise:

"Carefully, Miss Beatrice; those little toys often explode when we least expect it!"

And as she stood there, amazed, he laughed quietly and resumed:

"You hardly expected to find me here, did you?"

"I did not, and thus disguised."

"Where is Buzzard?"

"He will be in presently; but sit down and explain how it happens that you drop in on me so unexpectedly; for I am just as much surprised to see you as you are to see me, although I probably do not show it as much."

And Ferrett—for it was he—relieved Beatrice of the lantern and brought a low chair for her to sit upon, when, in as few words as possible, she told him of her escape from the asylum with Gia', and of her coming there in search of him, expecting to find him still locked in the room where she had left him.

"And now," she added, when she had concluded, "will you tell me, Mr. Ferrett, how you escaped from that room and how you come to be here?"

"I certainly thought that I heard the man you call Buzzard talking to Vane and Merwyn Temple a few minutes ago, for although I am not familiar with Mr. Buzzard's voice, I am sure that I heard them call him by that name."

"Yes, they thought that they were talking to him; but he was not here."

"Then they were deceived."

"Decidedly so."

"And who were they talking to?"

"To me!"

"To you!"

"Yes."

"And they did not suspect—"

"They suspected nothing, and the proof is that they handed me the money intended for Buzzard."

"This is all a mystery to me."

"A mystery that is easily cleared up."

"Well, I am all impatience to have it solved as quickly as possible."

"No doubt, as you are very much interested in the result."

"But you have not been masquerading as Buzzard all the time?"

"Oh, no."

"In fact, three different persons have taken the role of the occupant of these comfortable quarters."

"And they are—"

"Buzzard himself, Dr. Girardi's assistant and myself."

"And I saw Buzzard, I suppose, although what I have since learned—"

"No, you saw the doctor's assistant disguised as Buzzard, and remarkably well he played his part, too."

"Then this story of there being an eye-witness to my father's suicide—"

"Was all fiction, the two Temples having arranged that little comedy to throw you off the track and to convince you that your father came to his death by his own hands."

"Thank Heaven that I am relieved of that sorrow! But why are they so interested in causing me to believe that my father died as they pretend—by his own hand?"

"Doubtless that you may also be led to believe that he was ruined and may take no steps to learn the contrary."

"And do you believe that they know how he came by his death?"

"I do, indeed."

"That they know who killed him?"

"Yes."

"Then we will—I will force them to tell me that I may bring the murderers to justice."

"It is to attain that end that we are now working—only be patient, continue as you are now acting and before many days you will see your father's assassin in prison—the mystery of his death solved."

"You think then—"

"Sh!" warningly whispered Ferrett, as some one scratched lightly on the door; "here is Buzzard come back, and I must see him."

"Sit where you are for a few moments and then I will drive you home and tell you about this Buzzard affair."

"By the way, where is Lansing?"

"Lansing?"

"Yes, the man I sent with the carriage with orders to help you."

"There were two."

"Yes, but I do not mean the driver."

"Oh, poor man, he slipped and fell from the roof just after we had escaped from the room where we had accidentally locked ourselves in, and now doubtless lies in the yard below, crushed to death!"

"Poor fellow! but I must think of him later—I have work to do and— Poor fellow, he was a kindly man and a faithful officer," and then opening the door, he stepped outside and entered into conversation with a man who stood in the hall, and who was none other than Old Buzzard.

He had been absent but a few minutes when he returned and told Beatrice that he was ready to go, so, descending the stairs, they left the house, finding the carriage still awaiting them, which they entered, and having stopped at the nearest police station and sent a squad of men and a stretcher for the body—no questions being asked of Ferrett, who seemed to be known by all, even in his disguise—they were driven rapidly up town to Mrs. Morton's, when Ferrett bade Beatrice good-night, promising to call by nine o'clock and tell her everything concerning Buzzard and his relation to the Temples.

And the girl, letting herself in with the key she carried, went to her room where she found Gia' sleeping quietly with Mrs. Morton by her side, so without disturbing them, Beatrice, all dressed as she was, threw herself on a lounge, and soon fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XLV.

EXPLANATIONS.

AT nine o'clock, sharp, the next morning, Ferrett called, finding Beatrice and Gia' just finishing their breakfast, the latter being almost completely restored by a refreshing night's sleep in a safe and comfortable home, and perfectly happy for the time being in the companionship of her new friend.

When the detective had bidden them good-morning and had seated himself, Beatrice, having noticed that he had driven to the house in a close carriage—the same that had carried her away from the asylum—asked:

"Did you learn anything of poor Mr. Lansing this morning?"

"Yes, and am grieved to have to tell you that he was dead when the officers arrived."

"Poor fellow! I suppose that he must have been instantly killed."

"There can be no doubt about it, for his fall was a tremendous one, and he struck on the stones in the yard below."

"Does he leave any family?"

"None; but I will see to his burial and will attend to all of the funeral arrangements."

"But now, Miss Beatrice, to business: If Mrs. Merton can get ready I wish that she would put the clothes on that I have brought in this sachel"—and he designated one that was lying at his feet—"get into that carriage and drive to her destination in the carriage yonder."

"She needs no instructions, as everything is thoroughly arranged, and I suppose that she does not require any assurances that—"

"She knows," broke in Beatrice, "that she can put implicit confidence in you, as I do, for I have told her how good and kind you are."

"Yes, sir," added Gia, "I am ready to do whatever you direct, instantly and without question."

"Thank you, Mrs. Merton, thank you both," acknowledged the detective, bowing.

"And now please go into your room and prepare yourself for your trip, Mrs. Merton."

"The end will soon come and when the dark clouds roll away I hope and believe that you will both be happy."

And, the Italian girl having retired, Ferrett and Beatrice conversed on indifferent subjects until she returned, dressed in boy's clothing and looking the very *beau-ideal* of a natty cabin-boy.

Then Ferrett arose, and the two girls having kissed each other warmly, escorted Gia down-stairs and placed her in the carriage, and then, it having been driven off returned and at Beatrice's invitation again seated himself.

"Now, Miss Beatrice," he began, "as what I am going to say is somewhat intricate, please give me your closest attention."

"Buzzard—the original Buzzard I mean and not one of his doubles—was formerly in the employ of the Temples at their bank, and for many years was a faithful servant to them until an evil hour came, when he fell, was discharged, with the threat of imprisonment hanging over him, took to drink and finally became an outcast and a vagabond, living from hand to mouth on the charity of his friends."

"This will explain the hold the Temples have on him, for they threatened, it appeared, to immediately have him thrown into prison for embezzlement, should he ever decline to do whatever they required of him."

"How did I learn this? Through having befriended him several times, and having saved his life once, when he fell into the river one cold night, while under the influence of liquor."

"Knowing where he lived and having conceived the idea of throwing you into the private mad-house, after telling you of the manner in which your father met his death, they offered him a certain sum, besides threatening him, for the use of his room on the evening when you rescued me from drowning."

"Buzzard immediately came to me with the story, not knowing what their object was and believing them capable of anything—even of murder."

"I told him to go ahead, but to keep me posted, and a short time after he again returned to notify me that he had written you a note—he had carefully remembered the name and address—at their dictation, and they had mailed it themselves."

"But I never received it," exclaimed the girl.

"No, for thanks to my professional influence the postman delivered it quietly to Mrs. Morton, who in turn handed it to me; I have it yet, by the way, for although I felt warranted in intercepting it, I did not think that I was justified in opening correspondence addressed to another person."

"But Buzzard, as we call him in detective circles, had told me of the contents of the communication, and I laid my plans accordingly, and took precautions against any harm befalling you by going to Buzzard's room,

piercing a hole through the wall, close under the eaves so that I could enter and leave his room without using the door."

"On the day that you were in the room I was concealed under the bed, and heard every word of the false statement made to you, my presence being entirely unsuspected by Garleigh."

"Garleigh?"

"Yes."

"That was the name of the man who impersonated Buzzard?"

"Yes; he is a broken down actor who is now in the employ of Girardi."

"Then when you left me—"

"I simply crawled back into the room and lay, listening until you had gone out, but remained in hopes that something further might transpire."

"Then that accounts for your not being in the hall when I went out."

"Precisely; for I did not wish to prevent your being taken to the asylum as we had agreed."

"But the man who dropped through the trap in the roof on your shoulders?"

"That was Garleigh."

"When I heard Girardi offering violence I could no longer remain quiet, and hurried to your assistance with the result that you know."

"This actor had heard you, probably, and climbing out of the trap-door in Buzzard's room had reached the other opening."

"Yes, much to my discomfiture," replied Ferrett, smiling.

"But after you had gone, Buzzard, who was below, came up-stairs and released me, knowing where I was from the conversation of the two Vanes as they stood there a minute before separating."

"And then—"

"They had told Buzzard that they would be back that night and pay him, so I camped there and took his place, while he went to a hotel and remained until late, when he came back, after satisfying himself that they had surely gone."

"And do you think that Buzzard will not be frightened into exposing this trick?"

"No, for he has a hold on them and they will not dare threaten him."

"Besides, I am of the opinion that they will not be in a position to hunt Buzzard up after to-night, if things work as I anticipate."

"And now, Mr. Ferrett, one thing more: where has Gia gone?"

"On board the Glean."

"Alone and unprotected?"

"Your brother is in command of her and has twenty of his friends as crew."

"Then that is as safe a place as she could find in or about the city."

"Yes; and now, Miss Beatrice, will you appear as soon as possible as Miss Reade and get ready to return to Westview?"

"Certainly."

"You will find Mervyn Temple there, and will say to Miss Rivers that you have returned to see her for a short time; that your circumstances are improved, and that you will never have to go out to service again, you hope."

"If Temple invites you both to go sailing, accept the invitation; if he does not, get Miss Rivers to ask him to take you."

"Dress handsomely, and forget that you were ever a servant, and during what happens to-night—if anything *does* happen, watch her carefully, for she will then learn that the man to whom she is engaged is already married, and it will be a cruel blow to her."

"And you?"

"I will call on Mr. Temple in regard to his yacht, and will introduce myself to him as Mr. Farrington."

"You will take a carriage that I will send to you, and arrive at Miss Rivers's home, as a lady of wealth should."

"Then I will get ready at once."

"Yes, the sooner you start the better."

"And now I must go, for the Glean will be waiting for me, and I want to time her arrival at Bay Ridge, so that you may reach Westview Cottage before we arrive at our destination."

"Remember: Hope and Courage!"

"I will not forget; good-morning."

"Good-morning!"

And in a few moments he left the house,

while Beatrice proceeded to put on her disguise, but while she was dressing a note was handed to her, that said:

"Ask Mrs. Merton's maid, whom you will find at her home—you know the address—to give you a full white suit or dress for her, and take it to Westview with you."

And when she was ready she left the house, and took the carriage that awaited her, being driven to Gia's home, where she procured all the articles required, and then started for Long Island.

CHAPTER XLVI.

RENIE'S INDIGNATION.

It was a magnificent team that Ferrett's forethought had provided for Beatrice, and as she rolled smoothly and swiftly along, she laid back against the soft cushions of the elegant and comfortable carriage, her mind full of suspicions, and longing for the hour when this life of turmoil and restlessness would be over, and she would once more be quiet and happy.

It did not take long for the fast-trotting team to whirl the carriage out to Westview, and as she swept up the circular drive that led to the house, Beatrice saw, seated on the broad veranda, Renie and two gentlemen, whom she discovered to be the two Temples.

They were chatting and laughing, while none were seated, it being evident that the two gentlemen were either about to walk out, or had just arrived, the former proving to be the case, as they lifted their hats, and then taking a path that led down to the water, soon disappeared over the slope of the hill.

Renie, however, remained on the piazza, having seen the carriage, and waiting until it drove up, that she might receive the visitor. As it stopped, and Beatrice stepped out, the impetuous young girl flew down the steps, seized the visitor by both hands, kissed her warmly and effusively, crying, meantime:

"You dear, delightful, horrid, mean, sweet old thing! You don't know how glad I am to see you!"

"Where have you been, and what did you mean by all that nonsense about being angry and offended, and hurt and all that?"

"You knew well enough, you dear girl, that I did not want to know your secrets; I only wanted to see *you*!"

"And you are looking so well and— My!—how handsome your dress is! Who made it, dear, and what did that trimming cost you a yard? It is too lovely for anything!"

She paused a moment, and then Beatrice took advantage to slip in a word through the very narrow opening.

"I am so glad that you are not offended, and—"

But, Renie was off again.

"You're just in time, for Mervyn is going to take me out for a sail, and of course you will go with us? And of course you will stay with me for some time?"

"That depends on—"

"Depends on what? You are certainly your own mistress, now, and have no other."

"That is true enough, and I shall be glad to remain for a short time."

"That is right, and you can send your carriage right around to the stable."

"Very well, but I must get a parcel out first," and going to the carriage she took out the package containing Gia's clothes, told the coachman to drive to the stable, and then followed Renie to a seat on the porch.

"Will you go up-stairs, now, Linda? I want you to be perfectly at home, and you look a little tired."

"No, thank you; I prefer to remain here."

"You look tired, as I said, but you appear more worried than fatigued. What is it, Linda? Can I help you?"

Linda did look pale and harassed, and with good reason; for was she not there on what would end in a cruel errand?

Did she not have to tear from the pure, loving heart of the young girl the idol that she held there, sacredly enshrined?

Did she not have to tell her that the man she loved was unworthy of that love, unworthy even of her respect?

And as she looked at the smiling, happy face, she almost faltered, but the recollection came to her that if she were silent, Mervyn

Temple would surely lead her to the altar and forever after imbitter her life.

Silence! No, a thousand times *No!*

It were better that she should plant this dagger of exposure in her heart than suffer her to become the innocent victim of a scheming villain's cruelty.

She must insert the knife gently, and spare the girl all the pain she could.

All this flashed through her mind as one thought, and then, turning from the fair scene before her, she looked into the fairer face beside her, and answered:

"I will tell you part, putting a supposititious case to you and leaving you to judge what had best be done.

"Remember, this is not a personal experience that I am about to relate, but that of a very dear friend of mine, whose sorrows and griefs I wish to share."

"And what is it?" asked Renie, her sympathy instantly aroused, and her blue eyes filling with unbidden tears.

"This friend of mine," continued Beatrice, "is a young, lovely, charming girl, who is rich, has a magnificent home and everything calculated to render a girl happy, and, in addition to all this, has a lover, who is—or seems to be—devoted to her, and whom she loves fondly."

"Ah!" sighed Renie, a happy smile playing about her lips, "that makes the picture perfect!"

"They are engaged," pursued the girl, not heeding the interruption, "and will, in due course of time, be married, I suppose, unless—"

"Unless? What 'unless' can there be?" cried Renie, in open-eyed wonder.

"Unless some cruel, but kind, friend, steps in and undeceives her!"

"Then she is being deceived?"

"Terribly, basely, deceived!"

"And how? Is her lover a gambler, a drunkard, a *roue*—what?"

"Worse than any or all of those, as far as she is concerned!"

"Worse than all of those!"

"Far worse!"

"What can you mean?"

"He is *married*!"

"Married?"

"Married, and his wife still lives!"

"How fearful! And she knows nothing of it—the girl, I mean?"

"She knows nothing."

"And this—this wife—does *she* know it?"

"She fears it, and as much for the girl's sake as her own, for she is a tender, loving creature, who would die herself rather than have her rival learn the shame, the ignominy, the disgrace that would surely follow, were this innocent girl to marry her husband."

"And, why does the wife not warn the girl?"

"Listen, and promise never to breathe a word of what I am going to tell you, until I give you permission to do so."

"Not even to—Mervyn?"

"Not even to—Mr.—Temple," the last two words dropping from her lips like lead.

"Well, I will promise, but I would like to tell him."

"You can tell him—soon!"

"To prevent the wife's exposing him, the husband has confined her in a private mad-house, where the principal—his tool—will slowly but surely drive her insane by his treatment, and she will die there in a living tomb, unable to save herself or the girl."

"The husband *hopes* that she will die before his marriage takes place—he is *sure* that she will be mad long before that event."

"Oh, horrible, horrible!" moaned the young girl, clasping her hands to her eyes as if to shut out the awful picture.

"Now," pursued Beatrice, her voice trembling as she spoke rapidly, as if anxious to end the scene.

"What would you do in my situation?"

"Put yourself in my place and would you hesitate?"

"Hesitate? Not an instant!"

"Hesitate to save her from long years of agony, when she might be saved by a short, sharp blow, the pain of which would soon be deadened, for she would soon learn to despise the man, and nothing kills love so quickly as contempt."

"Hesitate! No; go to her, Linda! Put a hypothetical case to her as you have done to

me, and, if she is what you describe her to be, I am certain she would do as I would under similar circumstances."

"And that would be?"

"Such withering contempt, such utter scorn, that he would slink away like a whipped hound, anxious to hide from the gaze of an incensed and outraged woman!"

And she rose to her full height, her eyes blazing, her teeth clinched and her hand outstretched menacingly and pointing directly at Mervyn Temple, who at that moment appeared, looking back at something.

"Hush!" warned Beatrice, "here are the gentlemen; we will talk of this another time!"

And, as father and son came forward, she rose and bowed in answer to their salutation.

CHAPTER XLVII.

EXIT DR. GIRARDI.

WHEN Dr. Girardi recovered from the effects of the tremendous blow he had received, the carriage was nearly out of sight, and he realized that any attempt to overtake it would be ineffectual; so contenting himself with shaking his fist at and hurling a malediction after the rapidly disappearing and inoffensive vehicle, he brushed the dust from his clothes and walked back toward the gate, which he entered and locked, taking the bunch of keys that Beatrice had left hanging there, with him.

"How could that girl have escaped?" he muttered, as he walked up the stairs and, unlocking the door entered the corridor on each side of which were the cells where the unhappy wretches that had come into his power were confined.

"Evidently she overpowered Mrs. Strake, took the keys from her and then, using the keeper's bonnet and dress as a disguise, carried her niece with her to heighten the delusion."

"But, fire and furies! can I be mistaken in that?"

"Could it be that she disguised the Italian girl in the niece's dress and— *Corpo di Baccio!* if that is the case then Mrs. Strake shall pay me dearly for allowing two as valuable prisoners as those were to escape!"

"They were a veritable gold mine, and I could have demanded and forced the Temple to give me whatever I wished."

"And now to see if it is as I fear. Number Nine is the cell, I believe, in which Gia' was confined. Yes, that is it," and selecting a key from the bunch he carried, he inserted it in the lock, turned it, and throwing the door open, entered.

But as he stepped inside he was dashed violently to the floor, while a muscular hand seized him by the throat and choked him so that he could not utter a cry, as he was held down by a knee that bore down on his chest with crushing force and held him immovable.

In his excitement and hurry he had made a mistake in the door and opened cell *Number Eight* instead of *Number Nine*!

"At last!" shrieked the man who held him, "at last my time has come! For ten long years, jailer, you have kept me prisoner here, in utter darkness, never allowing me to see the light of day, never permitting me to breathe the pure, fresh air of Heaven. You have striven by all the diabolical tortures that human ingenuity could devise to dethrone my reason in vain; but this sudden joy at finding you in my power has done what you could not do, for I am mad! ha! ha! Mad! mad! mad!"

"You would not *murder* me!"

"*Murder!* It is not murder in the eyes of the law when a madman kills his keeper! No, I will not *murder* you, but I will inflict on you the punishment I have been for long years planning, and which you have so often inflicted on me."

"For hours in the silence and gloom of my cell I have worked, chafing one link of my chain against the other, until the constant friction wore them apart and I stood free, and since then I have waited patiently for this moment."

These alternate paroxysms of frenzy and sanity were more terrible than even continued madness would have been, and the craven, who was bold only when he held the whip-hand, cowered and trembled as he real-

ized that he was powerless to resist or to escape.

Grasping Girardi in a vise-like grip, the madman thrust him out in the corridor, still clutching his throat so tightly that, although his victim could breathe with difficulty, he was unable to call for assistance, even had there been any near at hand.

Pushing him along, having taken the keys from the door, the lunatic hurried to Number Eleven, where he stopped, and after trying half a dozen keys, succeeded in opening the outer door; then opened the second door by turning the handle, and pushed his prisoner in.

There still lay Mrs. Strake, bound and helpless, while, by her side, crouched her niece, almost completely paralyzed with fear, and staring at them with wide-open eyes, they being visible by the faint light shed by the gas-jet in the corridor, both doors being open.

Hurling Dr. Girardi to the floor with a force that stunned him for an instant, the madman seized the young girl and left the cell, fastening both doors behind him. Placing the child in the cell he had lately left, he closed the door, and then returning and walking past Number Eleven, he opened a small iron door that adjoined, stepped in and found himself in a large room, on one side of which stood a furnace and boilers, the fire already laid and the boilers full of water, or nearly so, as was indicated by the gauge.

From these boilers radiated a system of pipes that led the steam around and under the walls of Number Eleven, and it was by this means that the iron plates that covered the walls were heated when the chemically-painted figures on the sides of the room glowed into startling brilliancy.

And taking a match he ignited the kindling, which soon burned brightly, and in a few moments the fire was burning and blazing, the water began to boil and the steam to circulate through the pipes and heat the cell in which were confined Girardi and Mrs. Strake.

In the morning, when the attendants came, they were startled by seeing a bright glow proceeding from the furnace-room, while wild shouts and weird laughter rung out in demoniac glee, broken, ever and anon, by fiendish yells.

Hurrying to the spot they found the madman shoveling in coal and stirring the blazing fire into greater intensity, while he danced about and sung to himself, throwing himself into all manner of grotesque attitudes.

He was quickly seized and overpowered, and then, the keys being found on the floor, they opened cell Number Eleven, and threw the doors wide open.

But they started back, instantly, for the heat that came surging out was like the breath of a volcano, laden as it was with sulphurous odors, and gazing through in awe-stricken horror, they saw, lying on the floor, in distorted and twisted positions, the bodies of Girardi and Mrs. Strake, scorched and seared and burned beyond all semblance of humanity.

And at that instant came a roar and a crash, the walls toppled and buried executioner, victims and witnesses beneath their falling ruins, and crushed the living into instant death!

The boilers had burst, and hurtled destruction on every side.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

It was approaching midnight, and the dark clouds that had been gathering in the northeast all day, had now banked their black masses overhead, and flashed out forked and vivid streaks of lightning from their somber depths.

The thunder muttered and growled, and the wind was blowing half a gale, while the Gleam, under close-reefed sail flew along the dancing waters outside of Sandy Hook, making for a harbor.

The party on board consisted of Miss Rivers, Beatrice and the two Temples, Mr. Farrington also being a guest of Mervyn Temple, having appeared at Westview just before they started, and having been invited to accompany them.

They had gone far out to sea, and were

now hastening back to Bay Ridge, hoping to reach there before the storm burst, and all the canvas that the yacht could bear was piled on her until, one by one, the sails were taken in, and she now flew on with undiminished speed, although riding much easier on the boiling surges.

The Gleam being large, ample accommodations were at the disposal of all, and Renie and Beatrice had retired some time before, sharing one large cabin between them.

In the after cabin sat Farrington and Mervyn Temple, smoking and conversing on indifferent topics, until the clock, fastened to the center-board trunk, chimed eight bells.

"Midnight!" said Ferrett. "The hour when churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead! Do you believe in ghosts, Mr. Temple?"

"Not I," laughingly; "but, why do you ask?"

"I was thinking what a horrible procession those poor wretches, who lost their lives last night, would make, if their ghosts should appear before us, with all the accompaniments of lightning, thunder, howling of wind and dashing of rain."

"What poor wretches do you mean?"

"Did you not see the paper this morning?"

"No, I left town last night."

"The paper states that a 'Retreat,' in the far northern part of the city, was blown up, and then burned, last night, all of the inmates perishing in the ruins."

"A fearful calamity. Where was this place?"

"I do not know exactly; but it was kept by a doctor—hum!—let me see—Doctor—Doctor—Girardi!" and he turned as he suddenly pronounced the word, and looked Mervyn Temple squarely in the face.

The man shrunk back as if a bolt from heaven had flashed in his very face, and, growing ashen pale, trembled like one stricken with the palsy, while his cigar dropped unheeded from his nerveless fingers.

At length, by a mighty effort he spoke, endeavoring in vain to control his shaking voice:

"And all perished, you say?"

"So the paper stated," returned the other, carelessly, and turning away again.

"And what was the cause?"

"That is unknown, very meager details having been collected on account of the lateness of the hour that the calamity occurred."

"There was a tremendous explosion, a crash, and when the firemen arrived the building was a mass of blazing ruins."

"It appears that the 'Retreat' was a private madhouse, and that many lunatics were confined therein. Now, do you not think I was right in saying that they would form a horrible procession if they should appear before us?"

"Horrible, indeed!" stammered Temple, while the drops of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead trickled down his face.

"But, do you believe that ghosts ever do really appear on earth?"

"Most assuredly, particularly where victims and murderers are concerned."

And, at that moment a wonderful thing happened, for at the other end of the cabin in which they were sitting, the floor opened, and there slowly rose a dim figure, clad all in white, its features enveloped in a fleecy veil, and stood there motionless, while Temple started back, clutching his hair and shrieking:

"Look! look! there, at the end of the cabin! Is that reality or only the creation of my disordered brain?"

"What? where?" cried Farrington, rising and looking in the direction indicated.

"Heavens! You see nothing?"

"I see the center-board post!"

"Oh, it is no phantom! See where she stands—pointing her finger at me! She throws her veil back and I see—my God! It is *Gia*!"

And throwing up his hands, the conscience-stricken wretch fell groveling to the floor, while the figure descended, the slide closed, and nothing was left to show where she had appeared!

The howling of the winds, the thumping of the waters against the hull of the yacht, the creaking of blocks had drowned his cries so that no one had heard his exclamations

and cries except Farrington. He quickly approached the wretched man, assisted him to a lounge, and then brought him a glass of brandy, which Temple gulped down eagerly.

"You are better?" asked Farrington. "Then you had better retire and try and sleep, for that will help you more than anything else."

"Sleep?" whispered the exhausted man; "will I ever sleep again?"

"Do not leave me, or I shall go mad!"

"What is it—what did you think you saw?"

"Think I saw? It was not imagination, but reality! I saw, as plainly as I see you now, a face that was once very dear to me; the face of one who is now dead, and her spirit comes to visit me and to threaten me."

"Heavens! another such visitor and I shall go mad indeed; but—" wandering, and showing that his brain was somewhat affected by his recent terrible experience—"did I not try to make *her* mad?"

"Did I not *murder* her?"

"No, no; I am talking at random, Mr. Farrington, and hardly know what I am saying."

"I have lost much sleep lately, and imagine that I see all sorts of things. Of course it was all imagination, and I saw nothing."

"Oh!" he shrieked, as the floor opened a second time and the figure rose. "There it is again!"

"What is it you wish? Why do you thus torture me, fiend incarnate, who wanders on earth to destroy men's minds and drive them mad?"

"Back! back to hell, and say to Satan that I defy him!"

"But no, *no!* Good spirit—if such you be," and he fell to his knees and extended his hands imploringly, "do not mind my rash words."

"Why do you thus come—what have I done that you torment and menace me?"

The pale lips moved, and in a solemn, unearthly tone the figure muttered:

"MURDERER!"

"Murderer! I did not murder you, my *Gia*! I only sent you to—Keep away! keep back, I say! *back!*"

And as the figure advanced he drew a pistol and fired point blank at it, but, when he saw that his bullet had no effect, he shrunk into the corner while the figure, stopping a few feet away, repeated the word:

"MURDERER!"

Then he gave a wild cry and fainted dead away, while the menacing figure tore off its white robes, passed a damp cloth over its face—Farrington handing it to her—and removing the chalk that covered it, and stood revealed as *Gia*, dressed as a cabin-boy, who stooped to aid Farrington in resuscitating Temple, just as Vane Temple, Renie and Beatrice burst into the cabin, having been aroused by the report of the pistol which Mervyn had fired.

For a few moments all was confusion.

Farrington took advantage of this to pick up the revolver, then remove the blank cartridges that it contained and to replace them with loaded ones, leaving one chamber empty.

An attack of vertigo explained to the others Mervyn's fall, while Farrington stated that his pistol had dropped from his pocket and exploded, and then the unconscious man, having been put to bed by his father, who sat up to watch him, the others retired, while Farrington, picking up the white clothes that *Gia* had discarded, went on deck and tossed them overboard, saying to the man at the wheel:

"The trick succeeded perfectly, Herbert, and the trap you built while the Gleam was The Tramp worked like a charm."

"Now head straight for New York and we will land and take Temple home."

"One more effort and I believe that your father's death will be avenged!"

And going below, he sat in the cabin through the night while the yacht dashed on to her destination.

CHAPTER XLIX. SELF IMMOLATION.

In the parlor of the Temple residence were gathered a number of persons who have figured in these scenes that are now drawing to a close—two of them being Vane and Mervyn Temple, who sat on a sofa side by side,

the latter pale and wan from his fright of the night before, his father stern and defiant.

Standing about the room were other characters in this life drama, all appearing solemn and grave, as befits those who are about to pass sentence of life and death.

Beatrice, Ferrett, *Gia*, Herbert—all were there, while in the hall, just outside the door, and by the windows, a dozen men were talking in low tones, they being subordinates in Ferrett's Detective Agency, assembled to see that justice should not be thwarted nor the guilty escape.

For they were guilty—without doubt—of conspiracy, in plotting against the liberty of Beatrice and *Gia*, and it was possible that still graver crimes would be charged against them.

Suddenly Ferrett turned to the two men seated together, and raising his hand for silence, spoke to them:

"Vane Temple, Mervyn Temple, this is an unusual manner of proceeding, I will admit, but this is also an unusual case."

"You are proven to have plotted against these two ladies, and to have conspired with one Doctor Girardi, who is now dead, to confine them in a private mad-house, and there use all the means in his power to drive them insane."

"What have you to say in reply?"

"It is false in every particular, and we defy you to prove it!" answered Vane Temple, coolly.

Ferrett turned to the door, when there was a slight commotion outside and one of the officers entered, leading a man by the arm, his head being bandaged, while his eyes were covered by a heavy cloth, and as he stopped in the middle of the room Ferrett again turned to the father and son and asked:

"Do you know this man?"

"Not being able to see much of his face we cannot say," again answered Vane Temple.

"I am George Garleigh," said the newcomer, "lately in the employ of Doctor Girardi, and his secret counselor and adviser. It was to me that you, Vane and Mervyn Temple, made the propositions that led to the abduction and imprisonment of Mrs. Merton, or Giacinta Gisela, and Beatrice Waters, both of whom escaped."

"Heaven has punished me by striking me blind, for when the asylum burned I barely escaped with my life, and, as remorse has come upon me, I desire to atone for my sins as far as possible, and to see justice meted out to those who merit it."

"Cur that you are!" hissed Vane Temple, "you thus betray your benefactors, do you? Then—" and leaping forward, he drew a knife and was about to plunge it into the bosom of the defenseless man when a quick blow from Ferrett's hand sent the weapon spinning across the room, and Vane Temple was instantly seized and held by two of the detectives.

"And now," continued Ferrett, when quiet had once more been restored, "Beatrice Waters, or Linda Reade, step forward and tell what you know of this affair."

And Beatrice told of all she had learned while disguised as Linda Reade—at which the two Temples started—ending by stating her discovery of the swinging picture, and how she had found that any one familiar with it could enter the room secretly and without disturbing the occupant.

"And I doubt," she added, "if there is another person in this house who knew of the existence of that secret entrance before I mentioned it."

"Hold!" cried Garleigh, who had been listening intently, "there are two persons in this room who knew of it!"

"And who are they?" cried Ferrett, bending forward, intensely excited.

"Myself and—Mervyn Temple!"

"He told me of it when he was preparing me to tell Miss Waters the fictitious story he had concocted for her benefit, in which I figured as the discharged servant."

"Mervyn Temple knew it?" cried Beatrice, her eyes blazing. "Then perhaps he also knows *this*!"

And, taking a case from her pocket, she opened it and exposed a *bent pin*, lying on the velvet lining, the pin being rusty, as if it had been touched with some fluid substance.

"How should I know that?" sneered Mervyn Temple, trying to appear cool and collected, but trembling visibly, and decidedly ill at ease.

"I will answer that question!" said Gia, as she stepped out so that Mervyn Temple could see her, she having kept her back to him previously.

"You here!" cried he.

"Yes, I am here, and not dead, as you hoped, and can tell the story of that little pin better than any one else *except you!*"

"The night that I first met Mervyn Temple, I was selling flowers in the lobby of the Elite Theater, and during an intermission he came to me with his flattering ways, and purchased a button-hole bouquet from me, asking me to fasten it on his coat for him.

"I had an ample supply of pins in my cushion, and was about to take one of those, when he interrupted me, saying:

"Can you not give me that one you hold between your lips, little one? It will be all the more valuable that it has been caressed by them."

"I demurred, at first, but, as he insisted, I agreed, and took the pin from my mouth, but saw that I had bent it in holding it between my teeth, without being aware of it.

"See," said I, "it is bent and useless."

"But he swore that he would rather have it than any other, and vowed that, if I would give it to him, he would always keep it, and would, when he renewed his bouquet, every evening, use that same pin, which he would cherish as a keepsake.

"And so I fastened his flowers as he wished, when he thanked me and left, but, in a moment returned and asked my name, to which I replied: 'Gia'."

"The next evening he was there again, and then showed me that he had the pin, and so kept it up for several weeks, until he finally came to me one evening and told me, with much apparent distress, that he had lost the little souvenir, and begged me to replace it by giving him something in return.

"That 'something' was my hand, for my heart he knew that he already had—so the next day we were married.

"If that pin in that case is the same that I gave Mervyn Temple, or Carlo Merton, as he then called himself, there is a minute 'G' stamped on the head of it, for he had that done the day after our first meeting."

All crowded earnestly about Beatrice, who took the pin from its case, gently rubbed some of the rust from the head and looked intently at it, but could see only a faint scratch, until one of the detectives, handing her a pocket microscope, told her to use that.

Taking the glass she adjusted it, and then, with a loud cry, shrieked:

"It is there! it is there! and yonder sits my father's murderer!"

"Yes, gentlemen, that is true, for I took that pin from the hand of the dead Mr. Waters, where he clutched it in his grasp, having torn it from his murderer's coat in the death-struggle!"

All eyes were turned on Mervyn Temple, who grew livid with rage.

"It is a lie! a damnable piece of concocted villainy, and you, girl, are at the bottom of it! You know that your father died by his own hand, yet you track me thus, and add to your hate by releasing my wife and confronting me with her, just as I am about to win fortune with another bride.

"You thwart me at every turn, but you shall not live to enjoy your triumph!" and turning, he wrenched his father's knife from the hands of the detective, who held it, and leaped toward Beatrice, aiming a fearful blow at her.

But as the blade descended Gia bounded forward like a tigress in defense of her young, threw herself in front of Beatrice, her arms about her neck, only to receive the full force of the blow between the shoulders, and without a sob or sigh to fall to the floor, death-stricken at the feet of the man who had sworn to love, honor and cherish her.

Then, realizing what he had done, the wretched man flung the weapon far from him, and with a cry fell across the form of his dead wife.

CHAPTER L.

CONCLUSION.

A YEAR has gone by, and Beatrice has re-

turned to her former home, once more the loving and happy wife of Allan Jeffrey.

With her are Renie and Herbert, who are pledged to each other, and will journey adown life's paths as husband and wife—Renie having cast the wretched Mervyn out of her heart as though love for him had never entered there.

The Temples have gone to join the "great majority," the father having taken his own life, driven by remorse so to do, yet leaving a will in which he gave all to Beatrice—restored it to her as the only reparation he could make for his crimes against her and her father.

The gallows claimed its just due when the son expiated his crimes upon it; but ere he stepped off into eternity he made a confession, all that he could do, in which he stated that to obtain possession of the Waters fortune, he had taken the father's life, and referred to the bent pin, torn from his coat as he had leaned over his victim, and which small thing had been the fatal witness against him.

Old Mrs. Morton remained as housekeeper for Beatrice, and is of course happy, while she is the same old Mrs. Partington in her way of talking.

Mate Parker commands a fine ship now, the Gia, and though mourning the loss of his adopted daughter, he never tires of spinning yarns about Miss Trixie, though his shipmates do not believe a word of them.

On a comfortable little farm out West lives Old Buzzard, who has become an out-and-out Prohibitionist, and therefore is laying aside money for a rainy day.

The Gleam has been rechristened The Renie, and her skipper says she sails better under her new name, and the crew avow that it is the truth, as her record proves.

And of Ferrett, or Farrington? the reader asks.

The answer can be given by repeating a conversation between Beatrice and her husband, soon after their marriage.

One day Allan remarked:

"You never ask after Ferrett, Trixie?"

"No; and he seems to have entirely disappeared," was the answer, in a tone of un-repressed regret.

"Still, you are interested enough in him to wish to know *something* of where he has gone, or what doing?"

"Ah, yes, I do, indeed, like to hear all about him. He was so brave, so wise, so honorable."

"I can tell you everything about him, dear!"

"You know where he is?"

"Yes."

"Where is he, Allan?"

"Talking to you! Do you not suspect the truth, Trixie mine?"

"To be honest with you, Allan, I *know* all!"

"Know all?" he asked, with intense surprise.

"Yes; I know that you devoted your future, your life to my interests, and I blessed you over and over again for it. You were my dauntless knight, whom I learned to love with a love that would have led me to die for you, if needs be!"

"And you never betrayed your knowledge of the double part I was acting?"

"Oh, no, for I knew that you wished to keep your identity a secret, and so I locked my lips."

"God bless you, darling! No detective ever had a more dauntless assistant; and none surely ever won a more glorious prize!"

THE END.

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